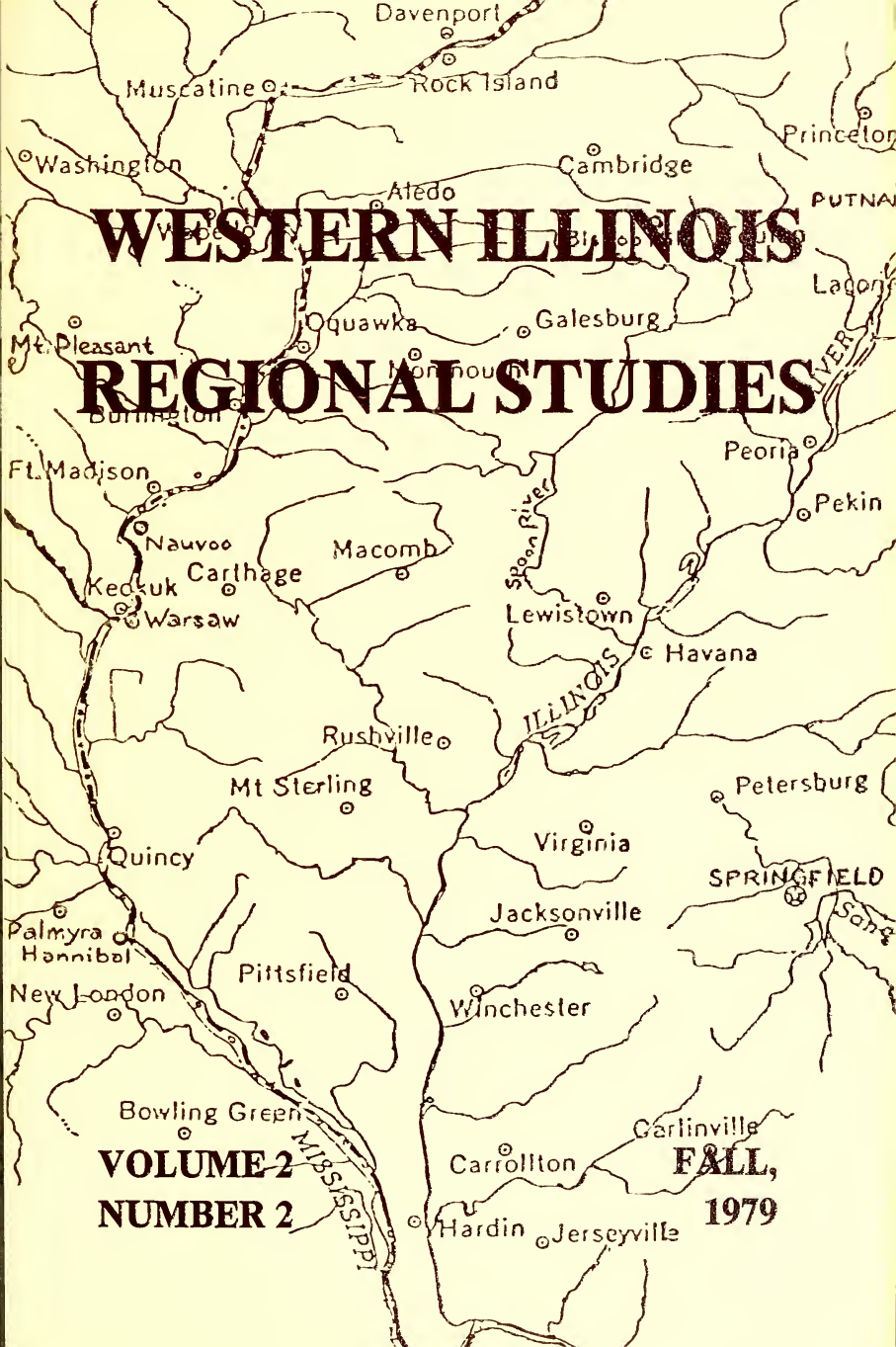
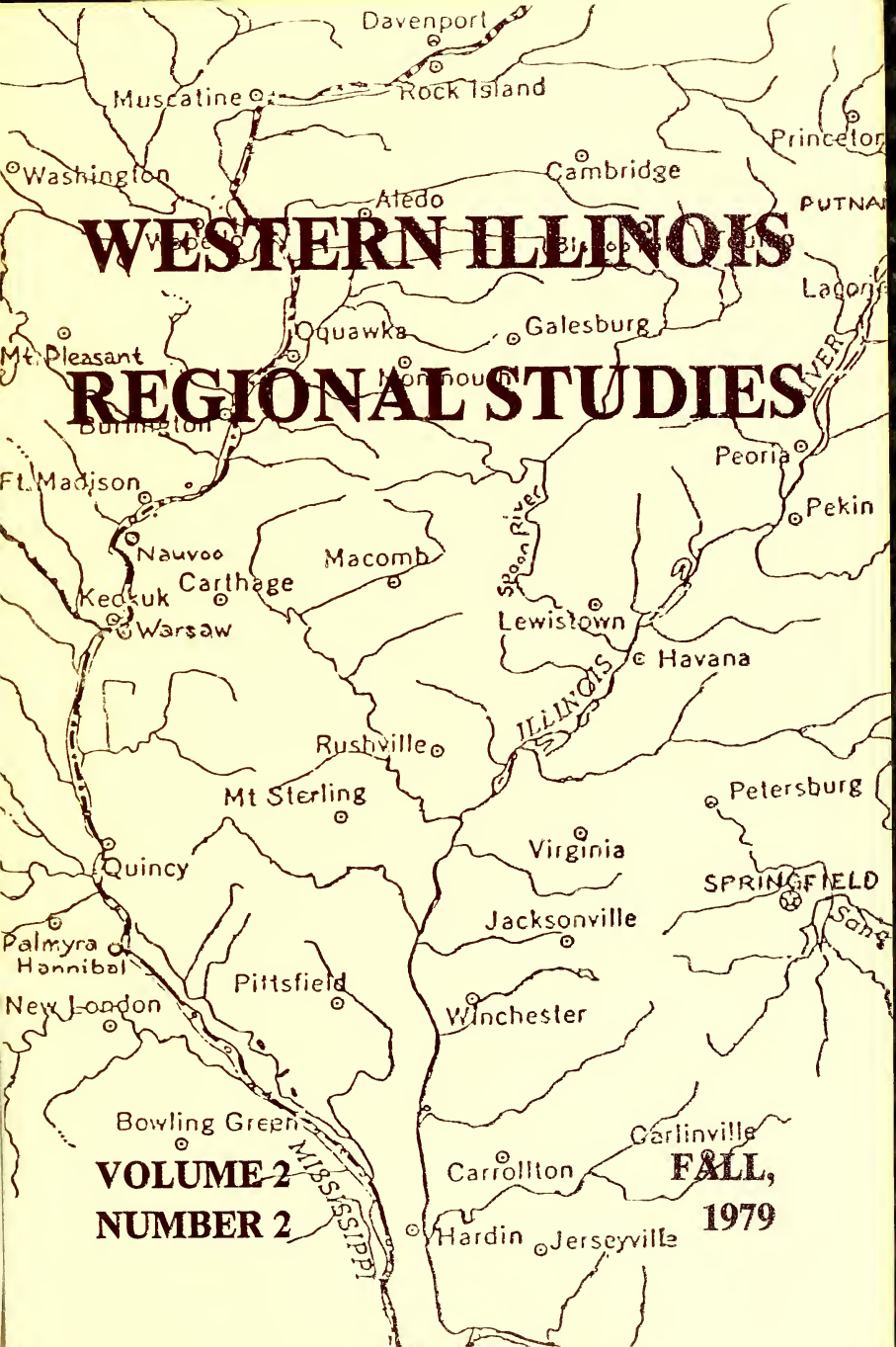


WESTERN ILLINOIS REGIONAL STUDIES

VOLUME 2
NUMBER 2

FALL,
1979



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WESTERN ILLINOIS REGIONAL STUDIES

Published semiannually by
the University Libraries
and the College of Arts and Sciences
at Western Illinois University
Macomb, Illinois 61455

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Subscription rates are $2.00 a year for individuals and $3.00 for institutions. Single issues are $1.50.

Correspondence about subscriptions, contributions, and books for review should be sent to Chairman of the Board of Editors, Western Illinois University, Macomb, Illinois.

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A SLAVE'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY RETOLD

Eileen Smith Cunningham
Mabel Ambrose Schneider

The following narrative was the recollection of a Jacksonville resident, Willis McDonald (or Uncle Mac as he was called by friends), of his experiences as a slave on a Georgia plantation owned by a Philadelphia merchant, Pierce Butler. The account touches upon daily routine on the plantation, the slave trade, McDonald's freedom, his arrival in Jacksonville in 1869, and his last days in the "colored section" of that city. The narrative was transcribed by Mabel Ambrose Schneider, an influential citizen of Jacksonville who was active in local history and politics during the first half of the twentieth century. The manuscript was supplied by Mrs. Eileen Smith Cunningham of Carrollton, Illinois, who was also responsible for acquiring the accompanying illustrations. The story begins as Mrs. Schneider, in 1931, approached the former slave on the porch of his home at 311 Anna Street.

According to Uncle Mac there must have been much commotion in the cabin of his parents, Aaron and Clara, on July 1, 1829. That was the day of his birth. No doubt, dusky hands slammed shut the crude door and window, and hastily and securely fastened a ragged old comforter over the fireplace opening. Salt and pepper were sprinkled generously over the hearth and over the surrounding wall as the wails of the newborn baby arose from a corner of the cabin. Why? Uncle Mac will tell you with a twinkle in his eye that every one of the several hundred blacks on the Butler plantation knew that these preparations were necessary to keep out the "Ole Black Man" who would reach through any unguarded door or window or, perchance, slide down the chimney, in order to slap and blind the newly arrived one. Of course he could not enter a barred door or window and, if he should choose the chimney route, he would be pretty well scratched in coming down. And plenty of salt and pepper coming in contact with these scratches was calculated to

Courtesy of Mrs. Cordelia Trumbo, Jacksonville, Illinois.

Willis McDonald

put the old rascal's mind to something else than blinding the new baby.

Evidently all went well in this particular case, for even at the great age of 107 years, Uncle Mac's bright old eyes twinkled with mirth or snapped with excitement as he relived in story the main events of his past life.

Clara was a field hand and soon she was back at her accustomed place after the birth of Willis, her first child. (Willis is Uncle Mac's first name. Slaves had no surname. He acquired the name McDonald many years later.) Indeed, small loss of time away from their regular duties was occasioned by child bearing so far as these women were concerned.

When an infant was two weeks old, its care was assumed by the older children and a woman whose task it was to oversee them, the mother having supplied her child each morning with the nourishment which nature provided before leaving for the field. Then at nine o'clock each morning, and at three each afternoon, the tiny charges were loaded into a wagon and, to the accompaniment of its squeaking wheels and their own lusty yells of hunger, an old mule would jog to the field. Here each child was given to its mother, for it was lunch time for the plantation babies.

As soon as they were old enough to run about, their between-meal food was supplied in a novel manner which most surely tends to disprove all our present-day theories regarding germs and sanitation in general, since Uncle Mac assures us that the plantation children were healthily fat and happy and that sickness was practically unknown among them. His earliest memory is of the large log hollowed out to form a trough and filled with sour milk, butter milk—and all kinds of leftover milk. Into it was broken a generous quantity of corn bread and the small darkies would crowd around it eagerly, dipping up the milk-soaked bread with grimy little hands, filling themselves to the bursting point.

Once a year a gala day occurred on the plantation. That was the day on which the master, Pace [sic] Butler, wealthy merchant of Philadelphia, arrived to pay them his annual visit. He was a man of most genial and kindly disposition and, upon his arrival, he was literally enveloped in a dusky cloud of welcoming, expectant pickaninnies who came running from every direction to greet him. He showered them with small coins and sweets, and was the idol of young and old.

While walking over the plantation he had a habit, upon meeting an occasional darky, of inquiring, "Whose nigger are you; who is your master?"

In case the master was not recognized the slave would answer, "I belongs to Massa Pace [sic] Butler, suh."

Then Mr. Butler had a most captivating way of appearing to be overwhelmed with delight as he exclaimed, "Are you my nigger?"

No doubt Pace [sic] Butler has been dead many years, but this whimsical bit of evidence of human understanding lives on to be told as a happy memory by his former slave of a century ago. The good men do is not always "interred with their bones."

The overseer, Doc Wildon, who was inclined to be cruel, was roundly reproved whenever reports of his cruelty or injustice came to the ears of the master; but the master was rarely present and Doc Wilson had his own way of administering discipline.

One day, when Willis was about seven years old, he engaged in a boyish prank and cut the bark from some newly planted trees. As punishment, Wilson had him tied to a post, just out of reach of a bear on a leash, who made every effort to get at him. Still vivid in his mind is the horror he experienced as his struggles to free himself from the post only served to enrage the bear and make it more menacing.

No less vivid, however, is his memory of a nutting expedition; and most certainly it was no less terrifying.

Between the Butler plantation and its neighboring one lay a cemetery which served as a burial place for colored dead from each plantation. In this place grew a hickory tree which bore, in great profusion, the largest and finest of nuts. No one ever dared to gather them. Only a necessary occasion ever compelled them to enter a cemetery.

An ever-increasing desire for some of the nuts moved Willis to attempt a trip to the tree, not, however, until he had consulted old Frank who knew all there was to be known about ghosts and "haunts" and charms to protect against them.

Old Frank warned him, if he valued his life, to keep away from a cemetery during early morning hours or any time after three o'clock in the afternoon. Accordingly, he set forth at high noon, armed as old Frank had directed with a bible in one arm and a hymn book in the other. He complied with requirements for placating the departed for trespassing on their domain by approaching and entering the cemetery backward. First he gave them a polite greeting, then he advanced backward toward the tree singing loudly as he had been told—

When I can read my title clear
To mansions in the skies
I'll bid farewell to every fear
And wipe my weeping eyes.

Louder and faster he sang, but he could not drown a faint wail that seemed wafted about over the graves.

"Willis, Willis," it kept repeating. Icy chills enveloped him and his throat was constricted by fear. Suddenly his voice was cut off. His heart pounded loudly in his ears which seemed now to hear shouts of "Willis, Willis." Dashing his basket from his head and scattering hymn book and Bible in opposite directions he fled for his life. So far as Uncle Mac knows, no one ever after that tried to gather those nuts. One such warning was enough to convince three hundred darkies that they didn't care for hickory nuts.

But the little slave boy could not remain forever a child, and sadder still, neither could he live out his days on the Butler plantation.

Kindly Mr. Butler was a shrewd business man and a far-sighted one. Even though it was a number of years before the storm broke, the thunder of Northern disapproval of slavery was sounding in steadily increasing volume. Mr. Butler drew a very substantial income from his Southern property. He had thousands of dollars tied up in his plantations and in the slaves, whose work only could make profitable these investments. If he lost this rich source of revenue it might sweep with it all that he possessed in both the North and the South. After long deliberation he decided to start closing out his Southern holdings, and his first step was to begin selling off his slaves. No doubt, he convinced himself, being a true Northerner, that these black people would not long be the property of anyone as freedom would soon be theirs.

So, reluctantly, the order was given to Wilson to select a group to be sent down the river to Savannah, Georgia, to the slave market. Aaron and Clara, together with Willis and his four younger brothers and sisters, were among those chosen.

Still fresh in the mind of Uncle Mac is the journey to Savannah. For a day-and-a-half they jolted and jogged along by wagon, until they came to the Savannah River, where they were placed on board a boat and shipped down the river to the city.

The marketing of slaves was a thriving business, and these markets advertised their sales extensively over the Southern states. Buyers came long distances to attend them.

Rare indeed, was the chance that a family would remain intact, and so with sad and fearful hearts, Aaron and Clara disembarked with their five children to Savannah. They were hurried up the wharf to the place of auction.

A long log chain was stretched in an open space, and to this were handcuffed two long lines of field hands—the men on one side of the chain and the women on the other. Aaron was placed among them, while Clara and the children were herded into a huge shed

with dozens of other mothers and children. Here Willis, who was then about twelve years old, was taken from them. Most bitterly he wept when night came on and he was not allowed to join them. Never again was he to see his mother or any other member of the family.

All the way across the state, from Columbus, Georgia, had come Joe Lee, wealthy cotton plantation owner, and (according to Uncle Mac's statements), trafficker in human souls and bodies. As the story is told, he was feared and hated, not only by his slaves, but by his wealthy, aristocratic neighbors, and his own family as well. The family lived in a big white mansion in a secluded spot on the plantation. It was darkly whispered that only timely intervention had kept him from setting fire to an outbuilding in which was his own son, incurably ill. He had been taken there upon Lee's order that he be removed from the big house.

Misfortune attended Willis, for, when the auction closed he found himself among the lot purchased by Joe Lee. Willis was strong and able and would be well worth, in the cotton fields, the $500 paid for him.

At first he was put to carrying water to the hands in the field. The lash was generously applied whenever he grew tired and loitered over his task.

Here, no mercy was shown to anyone, and the only consoling thing was the abundant food which shrewd Joe Lee knew was a requisite if he were to realize the last penny of profit from his slaves. Each was rationed, the men receiving three-and-a-half pounds of bacon each, and the women each were rationed three pounds. With this they received generous quantities of meal, sweet potatoes, home-made molasses, and such seasonings as salt, pepper, and sugar which was made on the plantation. There was also a profusion of "greens" growing over the whole place which provided amply the "pot liquor" so dear to the Southern negro. Fruits abounded, the plums and fine peaches being one of Uncle Mac's happy memories. His intelligent old face beamed in retrospection as he described some of the food and its preparation. Women field hands prepared their midday meal in advance. Practically the whole meal was prepared in a black iron pot with a cover. The bacon and greens were placed in the pot and its cover adjusted; then on top of the cover was poured the corn pone. This was carefully covered and the pot embedded in hot coals. More hot coals were put on top and the whole then covered with ashes. Uncle Mac declared this food was truly a feast, and that the bread was most delicious, being perfectly and evenly browned and very light in texture. This bread was second only to ash bread which was a

delicacy for special occasions. It was baked right in the ashes, being covered with leaves on top of which more hot ashes were heaped.

Of course the sweet potatoes and the green corn roasted in the same manner were a gastronomic delight. And as for the "coffee," made of parched grains and boiled in an open bucket hung over the fire—no real coffee, avows Uncle Mac, can approach its fine flavor.

Willis was soon given a small bag and sent to the field in the charge of an older man to be taught to pick cotton. At first he was given a small "task," as they called an allotment. Then as his ability increased his task was increased.

Like boys, regardless of race or time, Willis developed teen-age characteristics which ran true to form. It irked him that, as time went on, his sack was still smaller than that given the larger boys; it hurt his pride, and truly "Pride goeth before a fall."

The "fall" came about in this manner. One day when Willis was in fine spirits he decided to show these older boys that he could pick as much cotton as any of them. He rushed along and did pick an astonishing quantity. He was puffed up with pride when his work was weighed in that evening. Imagine his deflation and dismay when he found next morning that his daily task had been increased to the excessive amount he had picked the day before. Sick at heart he donned his new larger bag and joined the hands moving toward the fields. Feverishly he worked, but the incentive which had lent speed to his fingers the day before was gone. Try as he did he could not reach the goal of the day before. A great fear gripped him when night came and his cotton was weighed in. However, he was only admonished that he must make up the deficiency on the following day. The second day he was again warned as the shortage was greater.

The third day the task was a hopeless one for the deficiencies of the two preceding days added to the already excessive daily task was wholly beyond his ability. Frantically he wracked his brain for a solution. Passing the building where the picked cotton was placed a sudden idea flashed through his mind. He hesitated not one moment longer than to make sure he was not observed. Snatching up the picked cotton with all haste he crammed it into his sack, jumping on it and tramping it down as was the custom. That evening occasioned another sensation when his cotton was weighed. Truly here was a marvel. He had picked as much cotton as the strongest and most skilled picker on the plantation!

The next day no opportunity offered to repeat the raid on the storage place. Apprehension weighed upon him as his very ordinary day's work was recorded in the list. They said nothing to him at the time, so he went on to his quarters to enjoy his evening meal.

The slave quarters on Joe Lee's place were the crudest possible shelters, and at one side of the group of cabins was a large log house. High up through the length of this building ran a stout beam with many rings attached to it. Through each of these rings ran a rope to which a pair of handcuffs was attached in such a manner that the handcuffs could be pulled up toward the beam and the opposite end of the rope fastened to the floor.

This was only a part of the equipment in this dread place, for here punishment in various forms was administered in devious ways to men and women impartially. Terrible indeed were the things which transpired within these walls. Men had been seen hanging by one thumb until the whole arm was swollen to unbelievable size. Here was kept the dreaded cat-o'nine-tails—a wheel to which many short leather whips loaded with buckshot were attached in such a way that each turn of the wheel would land its full quota of blood-drawing blows on the back of the helpless victim. Here also were the stocks of which we shall hear more later. This grim place was known to the slaves as the "whip house."

Although Willis was more than familiar with the sting of the lash, he had never been sent to the whip house. The time had come for him to have this experience. It was the custom to punish those who had failed to pick their required amount of cotton by giving them a certain number of lashes, according to the degree of shortage. No one could be sure of his exemption until after supper when the driver made his rounds to collect those to be whipped.

On this particular evening he stopped with his group of culprits before the cabin where Willis was housed. "Willis," he shouted. Willis hurried to the door to see what was wanted.

"Fall in line," said the driver. "You have to go to the whip house."

When they arrived at the whip house old Lee was there. While the other offenders were being handcuffed to the rings for their lashing, the master questioned him as to his extra-ordinary performance. He was compelled to confess, and was given ten lashes for lying and ten for failing to accomplish his task. Added to this punishment was the impossible task set for him for the next day.

Early next morning Willis drew on his tattered shirt very gingerly for his back was so sore that the very touch of the course garment was painful. How dearly was the poor colored boy paying for his foolish vanity of a few days before!

As mid-afternoon drew on he could see that he was falling far short of picking his required amount of cotton. The thought of the stinging lash falling again on his already sore back was more than he could bear.

Fervently he prayed for escape, and opportunity came for him to slip unnoticed from the field several hours before quitting time. He concealed his cotton sack, and struck off in a westerly direction. Fear lent wings to his feet. He was young and very strong, and he hurried on until darkness came with still no pursuers within sight or hearing. Evidently he had not been missed until weighing-in time, and so gained several hours start.

Overcome by weariness, he came to a group of plantation buildings and took refuge in a clump of bushes near the barn. Sinking down in utter exhaustion, he fell asleep.

How long he slept he does not know, but he was awakened by a long drawn "Oo-oo-o-oo." With an effort he sat up to listen. What was it?—an owl, perhaps?

"Oo-oo-o-oo." This time there was no doubt as to its origin.

"Old Turner's blood hounds! God help me," he gasped as he sprang up and ran toward the buildings in terror. He hoped to reach the house before the blood hounds caught up with him.

As he passed the barn he caught sight of a horse tied in the lot. He untied the horse and sprang up on it, galloping away before his pursuers caught sight of him. What they did he never knew, for he galloped with all possible speed until after several miles, he came to a foot-bridge spanning the river. Jumping off he struck the horse a blow, starting it back toward home and hoping fervently it would reach there before it was seen to give away the secret of his whereabouts.

On the foot-bridge he crossed the Chattahoochee River into Alabama. For two or three weeks he hid in the vicinity, living on food secretly brought to him by colored people living in the neighborhood.

He began to relax and to feel at peace with the world, for he felt sure he now possessed a charm potent enough to keep even Joe Lee away. The colored folks had sent him to an old man of their race who knew all the charms and could tell him how to protect himself against the white people. (Uncle Mac tells this part of the story with many a chuckle, for he has ceased, long ago, to place his trust in charms.) The old man of magic sent him three times to a pond to immerse himself completely in it, telling him that this would wash away all memory of the past and make him unable to tell the name of his master. Then he was sent down to the brook to pick up two small white stones, one for each pocket, to be tossed at any white molester to convey to him that his room was more acceptable than his company. And lastly there was the real charm—a bag of salt over which certain words had been spoken. This was worn on a string around the neck and guaranteed absolute protection from all evil.

"One day," said Uncle Mac with a smile, "I went out and walked along the road and forgot to take my charm along. It was bad luck for me." And, as the story continues, no one can deny that it was.

He decided to explore the countryside and ventured forth along the public highway. It seems that there were those who found the capturing of runaway slaves a very profitable business. Substantial rewards were offered for their return by their owners, and the laws of the Southern states were such as gave every possible assistance in apprehending the runaways. So it happened that Willis was stopped by two men on horseback and questioned. He declared he was free and they were certain that he was not.

Taking him into custody, he was put into jail where he again refused to divulge the identity of his owner. He was placed with his bare back under the wheel and beaten with the cat-o'-nine tales, but he remained silent. The second day his bloody back was again beaten in the same manner. Still he would not name his owner, but when he was made ready for the same experience the third day, he yielded and Joe Lee was notified. He came to claim his property, and Willis was securely bound with ropes and thrown into a wagon for the journey back to the Lee plantation.

Upon arriving he was placed in the stocks, feet handcuffed together and hands also in such a manner that the wrists were almost touching the ankles. This strain on the muscles temporarily paralyzed the whole body. He was left here for days until word of it came to the ears of enraged white neighbors who demanded his release. When he was removed he was placed on a crude pallet and fed only gruel for a time as he was too ill to be given other food.

Having heard that he had been married during his slave days, I asked Uncle Mac if he were married during his stay on the Lee place. I was wholly unprepared for the change that swept over the old man's features. Never at any time, during all the previous recital of events in his life, had he expressed any ill feeling or desire for retaliation, but now he seemed aflame with wrath and hatred.

"Married on Lee's place? Never! He was too mean."

"Madam," said he, "If you were a man I could tell you things, but I cannot tell them to a woman."

Legal marriage, he explained, was unknown for slaves, but Lee would select wives for the young men on the plantation and compel them to accept them. Most terrible punishments were meted out to those who refused to do so. In case of scarcity of women among his slaves, Lee would go out and buy wives for his men, Uncle Mac declared. Slaves were valuable property and an oversupply could always be marketed, so Joe Lee was pleased to see an ever increasing number of children among his slaves.

Dark tales were whispered of his inhuman treatment of these unfortunate slave women. Instead of the comfortable beds provided for women approaching confinement on the plantations of many humane Southerners, it is said that Lee hastened difficult deliveries by applying the lash. This is hard to believe, but, if true, Simon Legree was not the mere creation of an overactive imagination.

After his first brief taste of freedom, Willis was caught in several other attempts to escape. He was becoming quite a source of annoyance because of this, and was now of little value to Lee since his experience in the stocks had affected his hands so seriously that they never regained the agility necessary to the expert cotton picker. It was decided he should be sold.

And so, once more, the son of Aaron found himself in a slave market. This time it was the market at Columbus, Georgia, similar in many respects to the one at Savannah, but much smaller. Here he was put through many tests to demonstrate his physical fitness to prospective buyers. He was required to hop a few paces—first on one foot, then on the other. His eyes were tested separately by moving some object menacingly before them, and then by requiring him to count the number of holes in a board at varying distances, and so on through a long list. When a slave was put up for auction he was much concerned and fearful of falling into the hands of a bad master. Young Willis was no exception, only that the prospect of leaving the brutal Lee was much to his liking. Imagine his joy when a distinguished looking, kindly man came forward when the bidding ceased to claim Willis. He led him off to join two other colored boys of about his own age, who had been bought that day. They were placed on board a train and taken to Montgomery, Alabama. After reaching there they were taken to the plantation of John McDonald, Sr., a few miles out from the city, for it was he who had bought them.

The McDonalds were people of means and of prominent position. John McDonald, Jr. was in Montgomery at this time studying law, and Willis, after a very brief stay at the plantation, was sent in to him to be his special servant. Here was truly an earthly paradise for the long suffering black boy. Young McDonald was very kind to him and their close association extended over a period of years. He attended to all the young master's personal needs and even slept on a cot in his rooms. Between the two there sprang up an attachment that long years of separation could not erase, death only ending it.

When the young master was admitted to the practice of law it became a part of Willis' duty, and much to his liking, to serve as office boy. The master had taught him something of figures and

letters, but had done so secretly, for giving any education to a slave was regarded with strong disfavor in the South. He had not learned enough, however, to be able to read to any extent, so a series of bells was arranged to assist Willis in finding any book or other object that he was to bring from an outer room into the private office.

The years flew by happily until the Civil War broke. Young John McDonald joined the army of the South, and Willis returned to the plantation.

It was a time of confusion for the slaves. They could not understand why the white people were fighting. Many were the vague rumors drifting among the slaves concerning "Sonny," as Jefferson Davis was called, and "Linkum." Each, so the colored people thought, were fighting for possession of the slaves.

The war ended and John McDonald returned to Montgomery and resumed his place as one of the city's leading citizens. Willis was again happy to be about his chores in his master's office.

One day when Mr. McDonald was busy in court, a strange young man approached Willis. "Are you still with your master?" said the man. "Yes suh," said Willis, astonished at the question. "Don't you know you are free," said he. "You don't belong to your master any more—you don't belong to anyone."

Thunderstruck, the colored man went about his usual tasks. He was dazed by such information, and he was also afraid to mention such a thing. Perhaps it was only a trick to trap them and get them into serious trouble. He overheard a man on the street talking of Lincoln and freedom of the slaves. He could not get the thought out of his mind.

A few days later he was told to fill the tank in which drinking water was cooled. He pretended not to hear his master who spoke again sharply.

"I won't do it," said Willis. "I's free an' I don't b'long to you no mo." "I dont belong to nobody."

John McDonald was in a rage. He ordered his former slave to get his things and leave the place and warned him never to return.

Hastily Willis gathered up his few belongings and started out. There was only one other place he knew to which he could go. He would go back to the plantation.

Arriving at the plantation, he was accosted by old Uncle Bill, the driver. "How come you ain't in Montgomery," said he. "What you all doin' out heah?"

"Ain't doin' nuthin," said Willis. "I's free, you's free, ev' body's free. Linkum done whipped Sonny."

Swiftly the word was whispered over the place. It came to the ears of a housemaid who was outraged at what she considered disloyalty to her beloved "white folks." She rushed with the news to her mistress who relayed it to old Mr. McDonald. He ordered Willis apprehended and brought to him, but Willis had been warned and he fled back to Montgomery.

Oh, how he did long to return to John McDonald! But fear kept him back—fear that he might again come under the stinging whip he had not felt since he left Joe Lee. He was ashamed, too, to face the master he had loved so many years—the master who had treated him with so much kindness. Why, he had never once been tempted to run away from him, and now, "Massa John" had told him to go and never come back.

There was one thing only he could think of to do, and that was to find his way to the home of Abraham Lincoln. He stopped in Montgomery only long enough to stuff his pockets and even his shirt front with Confederate money which had been thrown out of the capitol building to be destroyed. He had no idea that it was worthless.

He made his way over the country to Meridian, Mississippi, and here his money almost got him into trouble. He went into a restaurant and ordered food, which he ate, offering in payment one of the Confederate bills. The woman who owned the shop had not sufficient change for it, so she went across the street to get the change. Here she learned that the bill was worthless and soon returned with two officers who demanded an explanation. They took the useless money from him and destroyed it, warning him to not repeat the offense and nearly scaring the life out of Willis.

Even to this day there is fear and distrust of Southern white folks in the heart of old Uncle Mac—a fear and distrust so deeply grounded that even the most potent reason in the whole world could not induce him to return. He now laughs at his early fears concerning "Ha'nts" and ghosts and witches for he no longer believes in them. But his early impressions of white masters of the South still remain with him.

He made his way from Meridian across the state to Greenville where he secured work as a roustabout on a steamboat going up the Mississippi River from New Orleans to St. Louis. On the way from Meridian to Greenville he had talked much to the colored people about the changed order of things and a new terror fell upon him. He tells how the Ku Klux Klan over-rode that part of the country and how severely they punished anyone who informed their slaves of their freedom. He relates how they stopped one night at the home of a colored woman where he had received food and had gone to

sleep in the loft of the cabin. Hearing a commotion, he awoke and peered through a crack between the logs of the cabin wall. He saw several black-robed men, one of whom was carrying a rope. His benefactor was trying to convince them that there was no one hidden in her house but they insisted in searching the place. He jumped through a window in the rear of the loft and escaped through the brush which grew behind the cabin.

The trip up the Mississippi was uneventful until they reached a point within a few hours travel of St. Louis. Here they were notified to report at the office for their pay. Uncle Mac was amazed for he had not expected pay. He only wanted transportation to the land of Lincoln, and the work he accepted as a matter of course. He received a ten dollar bill, the first of its kind he had ever seen.

After leaving the boat at St. Louis he loitered about the levee for a long time, trying to decide whether or not to attempt to buy food with the money he had. He was thinking it too might cause him trouble as the Confederate bill had. Finally hunger drove him to present it in payment for food at a nearby restaurant. It was accepted and he was much pleased at the number of pieces of money he received in change as well as the kindly attitude of the Northern proprietor.

Courtesy of Eileen Smith Cunningham, Carrollton, Illinois.

Willis McDonald House, 311 Anna Street, Jacksonville, Illinois.

Willis found work in St. Louis with a German butcher where he remained for some time. He finally reached the goal of his desire when opportunity came for him to go to Springfield where he lived for two years.

In 1869 he came to Jacksonville with a party of colored people to celebrate Emancipation Day. He liked Jacksonville, and decided to stay after being assured that his freedom was as certain in Jacksonville as it was in Springfield.

The years passed—comparatively uneventful years for Willis McDonald. He had married and settled down, adopting as a surname the name of his last master. He had employment in Jacksonville and his days were peacefully spent with his wife and foster daughter.

It was not until one day in the autumn of 1904 that Willis was to experience the greatest happiness he has ever known. He was hurrying along the street on an errand, and he was stopped by a grayhaired man carrying a traveling bag. The stranger inquired the way to the Dunlap Hotel, and Uncle Mac very courteously directed him. But the man did not go on. He continued to regard the man before him with an oddly piercing look, then began to ask him one question after another in quick succession:—How long had he lived in Jacksonville? Had he ever lived anywhere else? Had he been a slave? When? Where? How long ago? Who were his masters? His own name?

When Uncle Mac answered his last question by saying that he had taken the name "McDonald" as it was the name of his last master, the stranger asked him if he would know any of the McDonalds if he saw them. He answered that he would know young John McDonald anywhere!

"I am he," said the questioner. "I am John McDonald."

Transports of joy filled the old negro, and the former master was no less affected. They fell into each other's arms in an embrace so fervent that on-lookers cried out that a white man and a colored man were fighting, and an officer rushed up to investigate.

Former slave and master spent an unforgettable day together. "Massa John" wasn't angry any more. He begged Willis to return home with him and he would see to it that he never wanted for anything.

Long they talked of the years they had spent together, but Willis would not consent to return to the Southland. Something might happen to "Massa McDonald." In some way the things he had once undergone might again come back to him. Who could tell! He had known peace and freedom here in the North; why risk a change? The old fear which he can never dispel still warned him against the white masters of the South.

Next day John McDonald, who had come to Jacksonville as a member of a group of politicians who were accompanying President Theodore Roosevelt on a speaking tour across the country, left the city with his party.

He and Willis were never to meet again, but Mr. McDonald wrote occasionally to his old friend and never lost the hope that some day Willis would come back to him. He particularly wished for him during the last days of his life but Willis was then too old to attempt the long journey. John McDonald was almost one hundred years old at the time of his death, five years ago. He had never married, but a niece sent a telegram notifying Willis of his death.

Uncle Mac is actively interested in all that goes on about him and takes real pleasure in talking to his visitors. He has recently applied for an old age pension, and nothing about him indicates that he might at times be aware that the time may be near for his passing. The following conversation, however, proves the contrary.

"If it were possible to have any wish you might have gratified," he was asked, "What would you desire more?"

"Just to be ready fo' de Lawd," said he. "He has been so good to let me stay here so long. I just want to do what he wants me to do, and to be ready for him when he comes."

On page fourteen of the Jacksonville *Daily Journal* of February 24, 1939, the former slave's obituary was published: "Willis McDonald, slave in youth, dies here at age of 109 years." The article follows.

> Willis McDonald, 109 years old, Jacksonville's oldest resident, who was believed by many to be the oldest person in Illinois, died yesterday afternoon at 2:30 o'clock at his home, 311 Anna Street.
>
> Born in slavery, the aged colored man's age was verified from several sources and on several occasions. The son of one of McDonald's former masters in South Carolina once vouched for the date, July 29, 1829, when McDonald said he was born.
>
> The mild-mannered little colored man, who walked with a cane nearly as long as anyone here remembers had been a resident of Jacksonville 50 years. Older residents recalled that he was a man of middle age when he arrived here.
>
> He made his way north after the Civil War gave him freedom, stopping in St. Louis and Springfield before locating in this city.

McDonald, or Willis, as he was more familarly known, remained active long after he celebrated his 100th anniversary, and was able to be out and about the streets until a few months ago.

It was not an uncommon sight to see the aged man climb the steps to the second floor of the court house, unassisted, when he was past the century mark.

Wife Died in 1922

His wife, who before marriage was Lulu Harris, preceded him in death Dec. 16, 1933. He is survived by one son, Leland McDonald of Chicago, a foster daughter, Mrs. Mattie Carpenter, Jacksonville, and a niece, Mrs. Minnie Simpson, Hannibal, Mo. One son, Arthur, preceded him in death.

The remains are at the Gillham Funeral Home, arrangements being incomplete.

McDonald was born on a plantation owned by Pace (Pierce) Butler, near Charleston, S.C., July 29, 1829. Butler was a wealthy Philadelphia merchant who owned this plantation upon which 600 slaves labored. Most of the time the plantation was operated by Doc Wilson, a relative of the owner.

McDonald was under Wilson for the first 12 years of his life, and he remembers Wilson as a cruel and exacting master. At the age of 13 he was taken to Savanna, Ga., to be sold. This was the last time he ever saw or heard of his mother. At the auction in Savanna he was purchased by Joe Lee of Columbus, Ga., for $500.00. He worked on Lee's plantation four years . . . .

Sold For $1,000.00

In Columbus, Ga., when 16 years old, McDonald was again sold, that time to John McDonald for $1,000.00. He was given a name, Willis McDonald, by his owner. Prior to this time he had gone only by the name of Willis. The plantation owner immediately gave the young colored boy to his son and this man was his master until he gained his freedom during the Civil War.

John McDonald, Jr. was a visitor in Jacksonville in 1904. He talked with Willis at that time, and corroborated the figures concerning the former slave's age.

During the Civil War, McDonald heard rumors that someone was fighting to free the slaves, but he did not learn the details until the Yanks bombarded Columbus, Ga., and three days later over-ran the plantation where he was, passing out food and clothing to the slaves.

Came Here in 1869

After being set free, McDonald walked to Montgomery, Ala., and then moved rather aimlessly about the South for a time. He spent some time in Mississippi, then went to St. Louis where he worked in a butcher shop two years for his board.

He was in Springfield from 1864 to 1869, after which he came to Jacksonville. During the more active part of his life he was employed by a number of business firms and individuals.

McDonald's mind was keen as to events in the days of slavery. While unschooled, he had a knack of remembering names and dates, and few ever doubted that his age was what he said it was. Then came the testimony of his former owner's son, and it was generally accepted that Willis McDonald was born on July 29, 1829.

QUINCY AND MEREDOSIA IN 1842: CHARLES CARTER LANGDON'S TRAVEL LETTERS

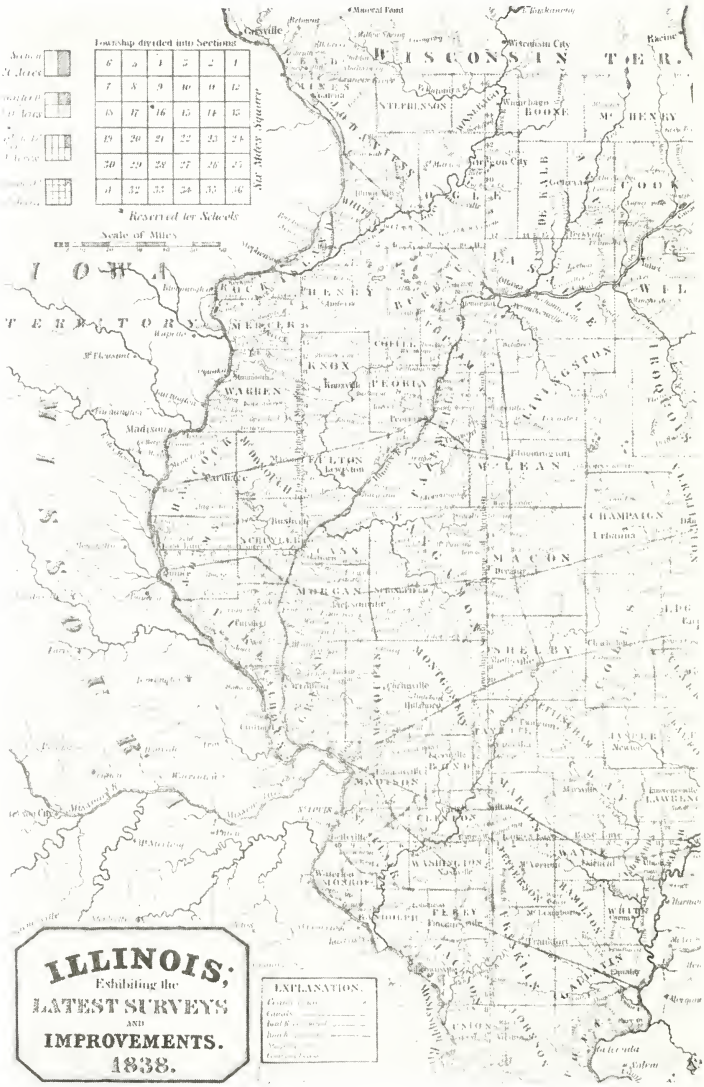
John E. Hallwas

Travel letters in newspapers constitute one of the largest bodies of material about the Midwest published before the Civil War. However, such letters are seldom reprinted and almost never discussed. This is unfortunate because they are often of historical value and are occasionally of literary interest as well.

In Illinois, many newspapers carried descriptions of the state by travelers, but none was more devoted to this kind of material than the Peoria *Register and North-Western Gazetteer*. It was founded in April of 1837 by Samuel H. Davis, who mentioned in his prospectus that he was "aware of the great interest which prevails throughout the Atlantic states in regard to information from the west," and so he intended to feature "topographical and statistical descriptions of the country."[1] As the surviving issues of his newspaper indicate, he did so both by writing articles of his own and by printing letters written by regional residents and travelers. The *Register and North-Western Gazetteer* soon had a considerable circulation in the East as well as within Illinois. In September of 1842, Davis sold the newspaper to William H. and Samuel G. Butler, who continued to feature items of travel and description.

From a literary standpoint, most of the newspaper's travel letters are undistinguished. One reason for this is vagueness. Frequently, an author gives little more than a general impression of the town, county, or region being described. Another shortcoming is the presentation of common notions: the prairies are like flower gardens, the land is incredibly fertile, the river bottoms are unhealthful places to settle, and so on. Related to both of these characteristics is the tendency to summarize rather than provide a specific, first-person account of experiences and observations.

Fortunately, these qualities are not universal. Two letters which appeared in the *Register and North-Western Gazetteer* on November 11, 1842 are especially vivid and deserve to have a modern readership. They were written by Charles Carter Langdon—who was editor of the Mobile, Alabama *Advertiser and Chronicle*—as part of a



An 1838 map showing travel routes in Illinois. From A. D. Jones, *Illinois and the West*.

series of letters based on his travels in the western Illinois region. Although he is identified in the newspaper only as "Mr. Langdon," *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* gives his full name and additional information.[2] He was born at Southington, Connecticut on August 5, 1805, the son of a state legislator and the scion of a family line that came to America in 1646. After graduating from the Episcopal Academy at Cheshire, Connecticut in 1821 and teaching for four years, he moved to Alabama, eventually settling in Mobile in 1834. He was a Whig politician, and when his party purchased the Mobile *Advertiser* in 1838, he became the editor. He was associated with the newspaper until 1853. As his political career developed, he served as mayor of Mobile (1849-55), state legislator (1855-56, 1862, 1882-84), and Alabama Secretary of State (1885-88). He died on June 8, 1889.

A headnote to the series—written by the Butler brothers—explains Langdon's motive for visiting Illinois: "We understand that the journey was undertaken at the solicitation of a number of gentlemen of Alabama, who stand ready to remove to our state with Mr. L. if he shall, after due examination of the country, recommend it. He seems to have commenced his written observations at Hannibal, Mo., to a description of which his first letter is devoted. We commence the publication with No. 2, written from Quincy. . . ."[3] As this indicates, Letter No. 1, concerning Hannibal, did not appear in the *Register and North-Western Gazetteer*. Copies of the Mobile *Advertiser and Chronicle* for 1842 are not available, and so the first letter has not been recovered. However, letters two, three, and four—written in Quincy, Springfield, and Peoria—are included in the November 11 issue, and a fifth letter—also written in Peoria—is found in the November 18 issue. No other letters in this series are found in the surviving issues of the Peoria newspaper.

Langdon's fourth and fifth letters are not particularly interesting. The former offers a brief general description of Springfield, a discussion of the internal improvement program in Illinois, an assessment of the soil fertility in Sangamon County, and comments about the landscape in Logan and Tazewell counties. The latter includes a vague description of Peoria, a statement about the potential importance of the Illinois and Michigan Canal to that city, topographical comments about the Kickapoo and Charleston prairies, and remarks about the view from Peoria's Prospect Hill.

On the other hand, letters two and three are very interesting, for they offer a vivid contrast between two river towns, Quincy and Meredosia. As the author points out, the one is a beautiful, thriving

community on the Mississippi, while the other is a small, ugly landing place on the Illinois. Quincy has many businesses and has a vital relationship with its agricultural hinterland. Meredosia has almost no business development and derives its importance from simply being at the connecting point of the Illinois River and the state's first railroad, the Northern Cross. The hotels in which Langdon stays, the Quincy House and Long's "house of entertainment," epitomize the level of development in each community.

The author's familiarity with the East Coast influences his perception of western Illinois. The area around Quincy, which looks like an old settled region, reminds him of river valleys in the East, and in general, the more well developed a town or agricultural area appears to be, the better he likes it. Quincy itself, with its town square, brick buildings, and elegant hotel, has an air of substantiality and culture that greatly impresses him. On the other hand, he has nothing at all to say about Mount Sterling and is repulsed by Meredosia. Another way of saying the same thing is that Langdon is no lover of the frontier—and his letters clearly indicate that in 1842 frontier conditions existed in some areas of western Illinois but not in others.

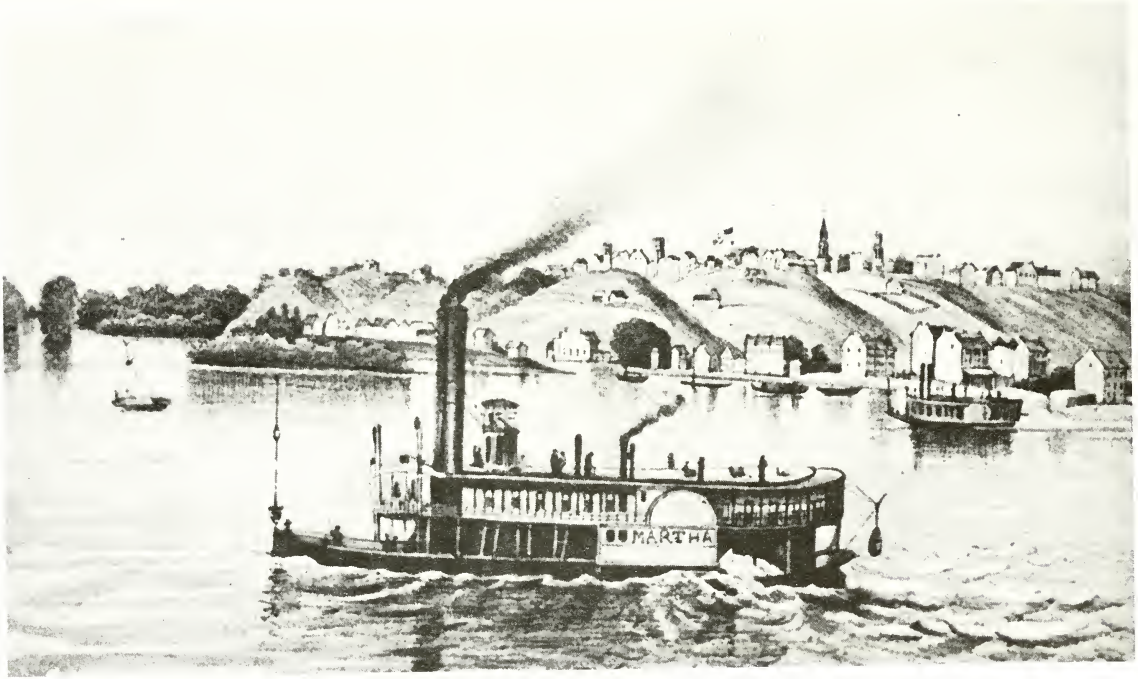
One other aspect of letters two and three which makes them interesting is that the author emerges as a distinctive personality. Along with his aesthetic appreciation of landscape, interest in business and agricultural development, knowledge of the East Coast, and dislike of frontier conditions, the reader is also made aware of his political prejudice, belief in temperance, and talent for ridicule. It is the last of these qualities which makes the description of his experience at Long's "house of entertainment" one of the most unique passages in early Illinois travel literature.

The two letters are reprinted here just as they appeared in the Peoria *Register and North-Western Gazetteer*. They should demonstrate to historians and literary scholars alike the value of including material of this kind in studies of the early Midwest.

No. 2

Quincy, (Illinois,) Sept. 3, 1842.

This is without doubt one of the most pleasant and thriving towns in the west. I was prepared by descriptions I had heard, to find a very pretty and comfortable place, but had formed but a very imperfect conception of the size and business capacities of the city, the elegant refinements of its inhabitants, or the



Lithograph of Quincy in 1848. From Henry Lewis, *The Valley of the Mississippi Illustrated*.

unrivaled beauty of the surrounding country. I found here some Mobile friends, who have spent the two last summers in this delightful place, to whom I am under many obligations for their kind attentions, and the facilities they have extended to me in forming acquaintances, and making me familiar with a section of country so full of interest, so rich in landscape beauty. I know not when I have spent time more pleasantly than the last three days in this city of Quincy, and I leave this evening with sincere regret, yielding to that stern necessity which compels me to prosecute my journey.

The city of Quincy is handsomely situated on a high and commanding bluff on the east bank of the Mississippi, is the county seat of the county of Adams, and contains some 2800 or 3000 inhabitants. In the center of town is a large public square, gently sloping to the west, neatly enclosed, and covered with nature's simplest and most beautiful carpet of green; fronting which on the east side is the large brick court house, on the south side the Quincy house, a splendid hotel which cost $100,000, and the remainder on the four sides filled up with substantial brick buildings, stores, &c. Around the city are many private dwellings of taste and beauty, and under the bluff on the bank of the river are numerous large warehouses, a flour mill, a steam saw mill, a paper mill, a castor oil factory, a lard oil factor, &c, &c. The city also contains no less than nine churches, which speaks well for the cause of religion. The population of the city is mostly from New England, and the society partakes much, of course, of the New England character. The city is remarkable for the good morals and the sobriety of its inhabitants. During my three days visit I have not only not seen a person intoxicated, but I have not seen even a drop of ardent spirits. The town is steadily improving, there being now some thirty or forty brick buildings in the course of erection.

The county of Adams is one of the richest in the state, almost every foot of its land being not only fit for cultivation, but of remarkable fertility. The country directly back of Quincy, for miles in extent, as far as the eye can reach, is a continued prairie, agreeably diversified with gentle undulations of hill and dale, with a soil of unsurpassed fertility, a considerable portion of which is in a state of cultivation. The view is magnificent beyond description, and one which I shall not attempt to describe. But in truth I can say,

"The sun in all his broad career,
Ne'er looked upon a fairer land."

From the fact that there are no trees in view, the country wears the appearance of an old settled region in a high state of cultivation. The rich natural meadows of prairie remind me of the beautiful meadows on the banks of the Connecticut, the

Hudson and the Schuylkill. The principal productions are wheat, corn and oats, though there are large fields of hemp, tobacco, buckwheat, castor oil bean, &c., while vegetables, and all the fruits common to the eastern and middle states, are produced with ease in the greatest abundance. The prairies are covered with cattle and sheep roaming at large, and horses are raised in large numbers, at small expense, and sell remarkably low. There never was a country blessed with a greater abundance of the good things of the world than this, but all produce is selling low, and money is hard to get. The land produces astonishingly,—seventy-five bushels of corn, or forty bushels of wheat to the acre, being very common. Wheat is selling in this place at 30 to 31 cents, and extremely dull at that. A man here with a good farm and free from debt, can live like a lord; but if he is in debt, he must stay so for the present. The population of the county is composed mostly of Kentuckians.

The manufacture of lamp oil from lard, I predict, will become immediately a business of great importance throughout this country. Both the oil and the candles are in constant use at the Quincy house, and the proprietor informs me that they are equal for light and durability, and in every other respect, to sperm. There is no loss by the process of manufacturing—100 pounds of lard will produce the hundred pounds in oil and candles. Of course the candles and oil can be furnished very low. The latter is selling here now at 75 cents per gallon, but can be afforded much lower. Instead of paying 50 cents a pound for sperm candles, these, equal to sperm, can be furnished at the price of lard. What an immense saving to the country; and what an important discovery for this "hog killing" region of the west!

The public houses I have visited, so far, I have found very excellent. The Quincy house in this place is kept in a style that would do credit to any city in the union. The building (to which I have before alluded) is a noble edifice of brick, pleasantly situated on the south side of the public square, affording an agreeable view of the city from the front, while from the back part, on one wing you have the bed of the "Eternal river," with its steamboats, barges, and rafts; and on the other, the beautiful prairie, in full view. It is really a most comfortable house, and the gentlemanly proprietor, Mr. Monroe, spares no pains to make his guests feel "at home."

I shall leave in a few minutes for Peoria, from which place I will write again.

No. 3

Springfield, Sept. 7, 1842.

I left Quincy Saturday afternoon for Meredosia, on the Illinois river, intending to take a steamboat there for Peoria; but finding no boat after waiting two tedious days, I took the stage for this place, where I arrived last evening.

After leaving Quincy, the route for thirty miles is in the county of Adams, which, from the uniform fertility of its soil, and the density of its population, has already acquired the designation of the "empire county." It contains 3200 votes, and elects a senator and five representatives to the legislature; and what, in my estimation, is still higher recommendation, it is a decided whig county. The county is admirably diversified with prairie and timber land, which renders settlements convenient, and every foot of soil is susceptible of cultivation. It therefore possesses advantages over many other sections of the state, where the immense rich prairies are rendered valueless for the want of timber. The little village of Columbus is located near the center of the county, in the midst of a beautiful prairie, and in the eastern extremity is the town of Clayton. In the latter village I spent the night.

The next morning I passed through the county of Brown, a new county formed from Schuyler, the county seat of which is Mount Sterling, a place presenting no attractions.

As you approach the Illinois river there are tracts of heavy timber, and the prairies are of smaller compass, though extremely fertile. Crossing the river, I arrived at Meredosia, situated on the eastern bank, on a small bluff of deep sand—as uncomfortable and disagreeable a place, I will venture to say, as can be found any where in this wide world. Its only importance is derived from its being the termination of the rail road from Springfield; consequently, all the goods, passengers, &c. for Jacksonville, Springfield, and the surrounding country, and in return all the produce of that rich and fertile region, are compelled to land here. It is therefore a mere landing place, and the only buildings are two or three good warehouses, two sorry looking taverns, and a half dozen dilapidated dwellings stuck in the sand banks.

The public house where I stopped is worthy of a special notice. The exterior, as I approached it, was *not inviting*. An old-fashioned signboard hung to a post proclaimed, "Entertainment by Wm. H. Long"; and a half dozen cross-eyed Dutchmen were standing in the door of the bar-room (which proved to be also the post office), who were not very attractive in their appearance. It was Sabbath morning, and the interesting group were luxuriating over a bottle of whiskey. I

Stage coach on a muddy prairie. From Randall Parrish, *Historic Illinois*.

was ushered, fortunately, into another apartment, which I had the pleasure of occupying in solitude during the day. A boat, it was said, was immediately expected, which would convey me to Peoria. I waited with tolerable patience till dinner was announced. The dinner!—it was a *great dinner*—though much better than any of the subsequent meals of which I was compelled to partake. As it was *Sunday*, it appears they had killed a *sheep*—"extra doings" for Sunday! The table presented three large dishes of boiled mutton, three large plates of boiled cabbage, and as many of boiled potatoes—this constituted the bill of fare. Chickens were running around the table and under it, to catch a crumb that might fall; and it took one hand constantly employed to *drive the hogs out of the room*—attracted thither, I suppose, by the flavor of the smoking viands.

Dinner being over, I strolled for an hour on the bank of the river in the hope of hearing the welcome sound of a boat; but in vain. I returned to my room, wrote a letter, smoked at least half a dozen cigars, and finally supper was announced; and still no boat. The supper was *cold* mutton, and *cold* cabbage, without the potatoes. This over, I indulged in another stroll on the river bank, with the same result as before. All was as silent there as the grave, not a ripple on the bosom of the river, and the sluggish stream seemed to mock at my anxiety. I went back despondingly, and retired for the night—and such a night as I had! The reader who has traveled much knows what a peculiarly *funky* odor arises from a dirty old bed on which every body sleeps, and which never enjoys the benefit of an airing. But this was not half. No sooner was I stretched than I was beset by musketoes, fleas, bedbugs, and all sorts of vermin, and in such droves too—my stars! what a time! Sleep utterly refused to come to my relief, and the night seemed a week long. Well, still another day and another night passed in which I went through the same routine of misery (except in the way of eating, the *mutton* had given out, and *salt pork* was substituted in its place)—and *still no boat*. As the stage was to leave for Springfield that morning, I was resolved to wait no longer for a boat, and accordingly took my departure.

Now such taverns are a gross imposition, and should be exposed by travelers oftener than they are. Mine host may be a very clever man, in his way, and I have no doubt is, but he is not fit for a tavern keeper, and should be made to "haul down his sign." In a country like this, where there is such superabundance of every thing that is good, there is no excuse for such fare. It is worse than any thing I have ever met with, even in Alabama. Mr. Long should know that in a dining room, *chickens* would appear better *on* the table than *under* the table, and a separate apartment should be given to the *old sow and*

her pigs. Mr. Long is postmaster of the village, says he was four years acting constable, and is now a justice of the peace. Of course, he is a man of *consequence*, but I still insist *he is not fit for a tavern-keeper*. Aside from this, I have no doubt *Long* is a very good fellow—and *long* may *Long* live—*long* may *Long* prosper in every thing but *tavern-keeping*; but *long* may it be before I am again caught in *Long's* "house of entertainment!"

The distance from Meredosia to this place is fifty-five miles, through a most delightful country. The settlements on this side of the Illinois river are much older than those upon the other, the country presents a higher degree of cultivation, and the farms are exceedingly beautiful. Here there is constantly presented to the eye of the traveler the neat and comfortable dwelling of the farmer, with his large barn, the flourishing orchards, apple and peach, laden with fruit, and all other conveniences and comforts that the heart of man could desire,—denoting abundance, ease, and independence.

Jacksonville is the county seat of Morgan county, and is a very pretty place, though possessing no other advantages for trade than are derived from the wealthy and densely populated county in which it is situated. This is the residence of ex-governor Duncan, and the county gives from two to three hundred whig majority, yet notwithstanding this, three out of the four members of the legislature are locos!*

*Locofocos were members of a radical group in the Democratic Party, but Langdon uses the term to refer to all Democrats.

NOTES

1 "Prospectus of the Peoria Register and North-Western Gazetteer," Peoria *Register and North-Western Gazetteer,* 13 May 1837, p. 4.

2 *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, XVIII, 149-150.

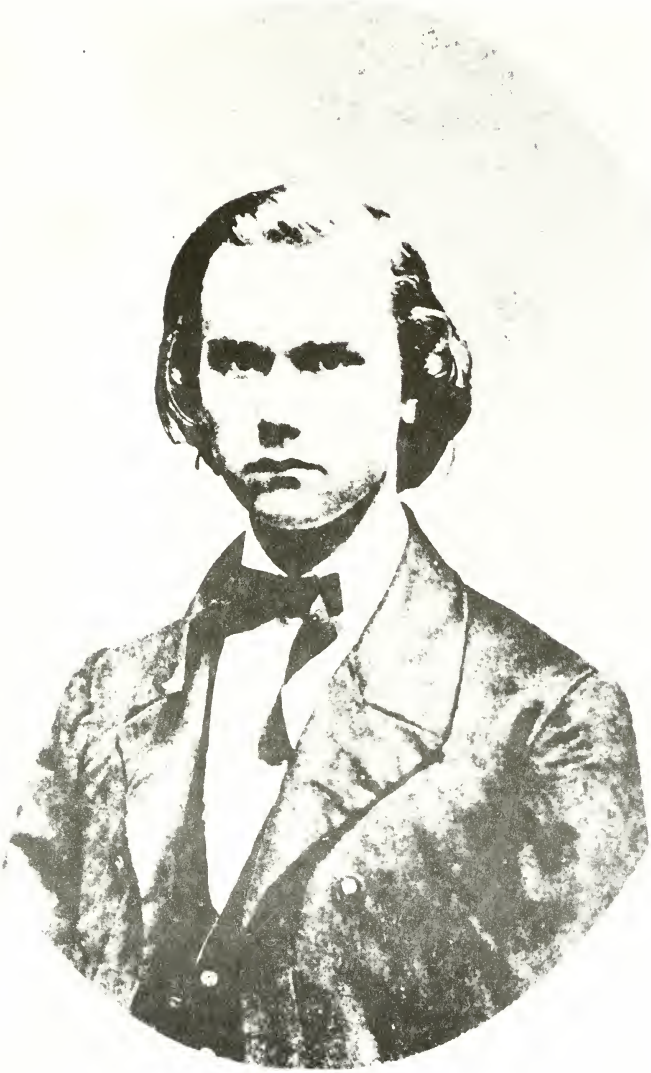
3 "From Another Quarter," Peoria *Register and North-Western Gazetteer*, 11 Nov. 1842, p. 1. The letters reprinted in this study appear on the same page.

AN ADDITION TO THE JOHN HAY CANON: A NEW CASTILIAN LETTER

George Monteiro

After four years of White House duty on assignment from the Interior Department to serve in the office of the President of the United States, John Hay joined the American diplomatic corps. In March, 1865, he was appointed Secretary of Legation in Paris. Fifteen months later, in June, 1867, he was promoted to Charge d'Affaires in Vienna. In June, 1869, he was again reassigned, this time to Madrid as Secretary of Legation, a position he filled until June, 1870.

In Hay's more than five years as a career diplomat in Europe, he was able to launch, in his spare time, a modestly successful literary career. He managed to write several essays and short stories that he would place in magazines such as *Harper's* and *Lippincott's*. His first large success of the period, however, came with the series of pieces he wrote at the end of his European stay on Spanish subjects and matters, seven of which appeared first in the *Atlantic Monthly*. These, along with ten others, were collected as a volume brought out by James R. Osgood of Boston in 1871. Of the pieces that make up *Castilian Days*, five of them had first appeared in the *Atlantic* in 1871 under Hay's name while two others had appeared in the *Atlantic* in 1870 under a pseudonym. Because Hay saw that his position as an American diplomat in Spain was compromised by the critical tone of his "Madrid letters," he had encouraged the *Atlantic's* editor, William Dean Howells, to come up with a pseudonym. Howells devised the name "Richard West," which, as Hay would later explain, seems to have been a sort of acknowledgement on Howells' part of Hay's origins.[1] But not all of Hay's "Madrid letters," it turns out, appeared in the *Atlantic*. An additional letter, not collected in *Castilian Days*, appeared in *The College Review* in March, 1870. The author of the piece is identified only as "Viator," a tag that Hay had used a decade earlier. This "Letter from Spain" was prepared for William Leete Stone, an editor of *The College Review* and Hay's classmate at Brown University. On January 31, 1870, from Madrid, Hay had written to Stone: "I send



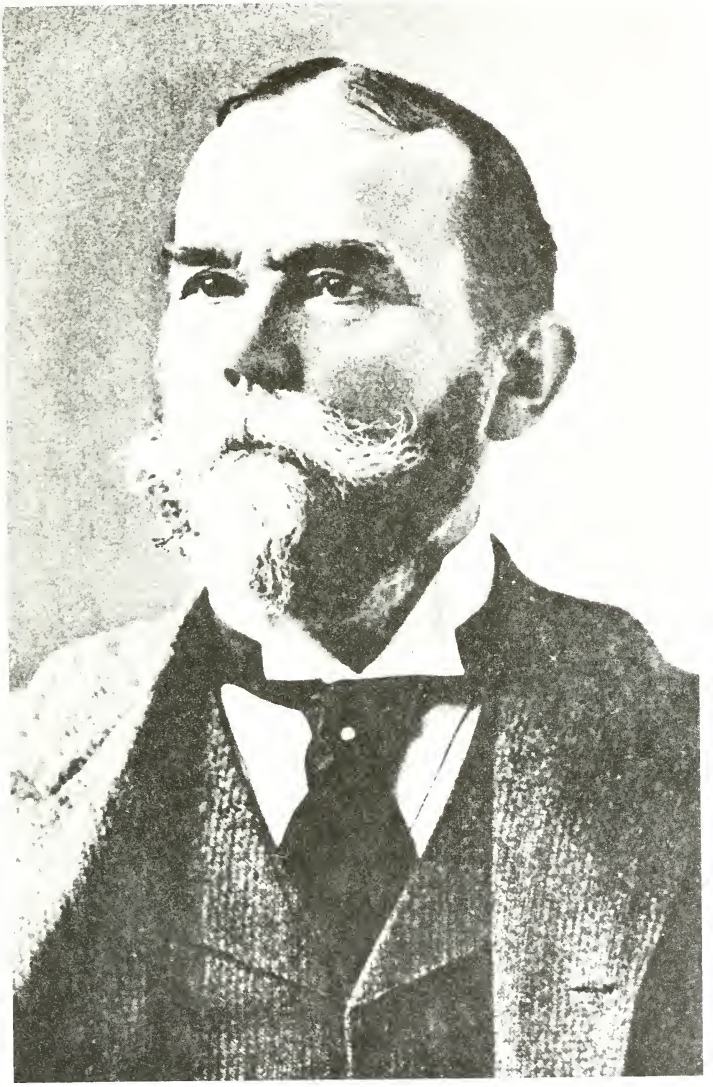
John Hay at age nineteen. From the John Hay Collection at Brown University Library.

you a little letter on Spanish politics. I am forbidden by law to do this, so that you must publish it, if you think it worth publishing, without my name."[2] Hay's Madrid letter, dated January 31, 1870, was published as "Foreign Correspondence," on pages 105-106 of the first volume of the periodical. Its recovery contributes to our knowledge of Hay's social and political thinking while in Spain and also adds a hitherto unknown item to the bibliography of Hay's published work.

The revolution of September is now sixteen months old, and as yet there seems to be very little sign of the crowning of the edifice by the election of a monarch. In fact there are many of the coolest observers who say that the reason all efforts in this direction have failed, is that they are contrary to the spirit and purpose of the revolution, and that the only logical issue to the present situation is the republic. One after the other all the available candidates for the crown have been used up and set aside. The Duke of Montpensier alone remains, and his candidature has grown so stale by the mere lapse of time, that although he is unquestionably the most respectable of all who have been urged—being of suitable age, of great fortune, great administrative ability, and unblemished descent—it is not possible to deny that he is at present the most hopelessly unpopular man in Spain. And this for no reason except that his friends want him to be king.

So that there appears to be a certain tact and forethought in the savage onslaughts which the Republicans periodically make on the luckless men who aspire to the uneasy *couvre-chef* which is known as the crown of St. Ferdinand. By attacking all the candidates in detail, and making them impossible, they gain valuable time for their propaganda, and will, if the game is continued long enough, put out of the field every available princeling in Europe. Their tactics have a two-edged influence. They are sure either to disgust the people with the candidate, or the candidate with the people. The incessant and irreverent discussion of the matter caused the Duke of Aosta to rip out a strong sailor oath and go off in his frigate in a fine rage, rejecting the Spanish crown with contempt. The Duchess of Genoa, also, read for a few weeks the daily press of Madrid, until the mere thought of her only child going among such a horde of radical savages threw her into hysterics.

These maneuvres were not enough, however, to frighten the Duke of Montpensier. He was Spaniard enough to understand them. He manfully stood by his candidature, and to show that he was supported by the popular heart, he offered himself as a Deputy to the Cortes in two circumscriptions of the Asturias. It was thought he would be elected by a great majority, and that



John Hay as Secretary of State, about 1898. From the John Hay Collection at Brown University Library.

the prestige of this appeal to universal suffrage would greatly improve his chances for the crown. But the ungrateful public broke this cleverly arranged slate in the most cruel manner. The Duke is beaten in both circumscriptions by fair majorities.

The Republicans have shown a most unexpected and remarkable strength in the late partial elections for Deputies, having carried, in the face of powerful government opposition, six additional seats in the Cortes, and casting, in the city of Madrid itself—the hot-bed of monarchy and militarism—the unprecedented vote of fifteen thousand five hundred in one congressional district.

There is a singular apathy and likewarmness pervading the Spanish Chambers that very unfavorably impresses a foreigner, in a time of revolution like the present, when the fundamental laws are framing for the reconstruction of the whole political system. It is no uncommon thing for important laws to be defeated simply because there is no quorum voting. It must be confessed that the opposition seem more interested in public business than the government members. A few days ago, when the estimates for the Department of Statistics were under discussion, the Republicans moved an amendment economizing some million reals, and, voting solidly for it, carried it by a large majority, until the party whips lashed in the lagging members of the Right, who reconsidered the vote and went back to their cigarettes again.

The present generation of Spanish politicians have been too long accustomed to the rule of personal leaders to thoroughly comprehend the significance of a true democratic government. They take Prim or Serrano or San Luis as their representative, and follow him blindly through thick and thin, and regard any man as a traitor and a disturber of the public peace who presumes to dissent from the party autocrat.

The best thing about the more advanced liberals is their attempt to abolish this man-worship. The Republican party has a distinct and positive platform of principles, to the realization of which they are exclusively devoted. Their ideal is a Republican Democratic Republic, like that of the United States.

They do not lack men of high character and ability in their own ranks. The finest parliamentarian in Spain is Figueras; the greatest living orator on earth is Castelar. Although the Republicans are in a hopeless minority in the present Cortes, the days upon which any of their leading men are to speak are days of gala in the house. The galleries are crowded to their full extent. The usually vacant benches of the right are full of dilettante deputies who come to scoff and remain to applaud. Even the streets surrounding the legislative palace are filled with loungers who have been unable to get in, and who hope for scraps of news from those who are coming out.

It is especially in the academic world of Spain that the new political ideas have taken most rapid root. Castelar is a Professor of History in the Central University. Moret y Prendergast is a Professor of Law. It is not difficult to imagine the bent of mind they will give to the tender twigs in their nurseries. At the recent elections, the quarter of the city inhabited by the students gave a two-thirds majority to the Republican candidate. This was due, not so much to the student vote as to the academic influence—as the age of majority in Spain is twenty-five years, and therefore not many students are themselves voters.

The difference between Northern and Southern nations is in nothing so marked as in the tone of their political discussions. In England and in Prussia, monarchy is defended on principle, as the best possible form of government. In France, Spain, and Italy, on the contrary, I have never heard a single argument based upon that ground. They all extol the republic as the highest ideal good, the impossible Utopia of abstract politics. But they say, with a humility that contrasts strangely with their natural tendency to boasting, that they are not ready for a republic—that they are not cool enough, not educated enough, in a word, not good enough for that form of government.

The young men of Spain seem to think they are quite good enough for the republic, and they will have it, if they can.

NOTES

[1] *Lincoln and the Civil War in the Diaries and Letters of John Hay*, ed. Tyler Dennett (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1939), pp. 310-311.

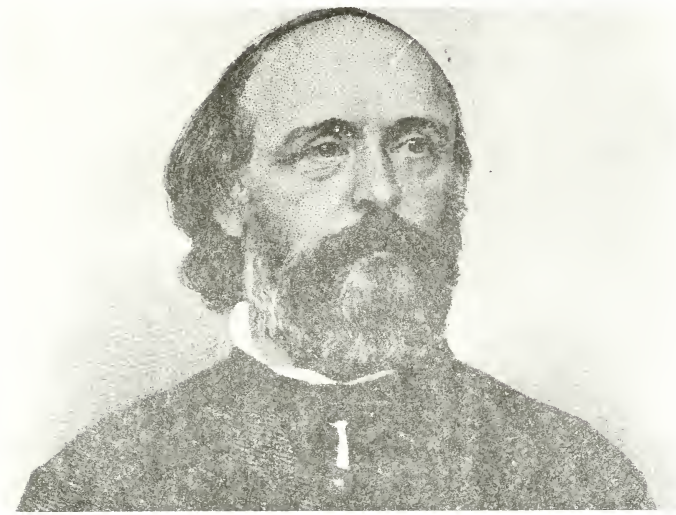
[2] *Lincoln*, p. 308.

COMING TO TERMS WITH COUNTY HISTORIES

Rodney O. Davis

"Every historian who writes on the Trans-Appalachian frontier—or any frontier for that matter—has to come to terms with county histories," says Malcolm Rohrbough of the University of Iowa.[1] Those words are equally true for the historian whose goals are more modest and have to do with Western Illinois. We have all looked at county histories; some of us have probably dismissed them as not very useful either as works of scholarship or even as sources of enlightenment, but some few of us, as Rohrbough says, have come to terms with them. I think that I belong within that number, and I propose to present a modest case for their respectability and continuing usefulness, though the favorable nature of the case may not be immediately apparent.

Most Illinois county histories appeared in two waves of publication. The first wave followed the national centennial by a few years, and represented a local response in many counties to the anniversary. What better way to celebrate the nation's first hundredth birthday than to collect and preserve its local and regional history? The first wave was followed up at the turn of the century by the massive enterprise of Newton Bateman and Paul Selby, the *Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois*, which consisted of the promotion and sale in at least forty-six Illinois counties of a one-volume general Illinois historical encyclopedia and a companion history of each county involved. So profitable must some of these books have been that, in many counties, the first publication in one or the other of these two "waves" was followed very shortly by a second one whose promoters were obviously after what looked like a sound financial investment. McDonough County's centennial volume of 1878, for example, was followed by a second book by a different publisher in 1885.[2] Knox County's 1899 Bateman and Selby history had an immediate successor in 1912.[3] Very often the succeeding volumes cribbed disgracefully from the earlier ones, sometimes whole paragraphs or pages without attribution. The county history business must generally have been profitable, for



Newton Bateman, co-author of the 1899 history of Knox County.

only a few books, such as Mercer County's 1882 history,[4] seem to have been totally produced at home. Most were promoted by publishers and a number of companies were involved in the business. Many Military Tract centennial histories were produced by Charles C. Chapman and Co., of Chicago; a few were done by Wesley Raymond Brink and a series of partners of Edwardsville and later of Philadelphia. Brink was more active in southern and eastern counties, but his career as a sort of historical hustler is rather well documented. He was involved in the production of thirty-six Illinois county histories and atlases between 1873 and 1884.[5]

The speed with which these volumes were put together is breathtaking to contemplate. Brink, for instance, announced his intention to begin a history of Madison County, Illinois, in December, 1881, and by January, 1883, the volume was finished and being delivered.[6] Such a schedule was probably not unusual in a business whose procedures became quite institutionalized. The compilation and writing were done either entirely by canvassers and scribes employed by the publisher—which functionaries also served as subscription agents—or, to some degree by committees of local people. At this distance it is now hard to say how many of the latter simply functioned as front men for the entrepreneurs. Brink is on record for using his own personnel exclusively, whereas

the Chapman histories of the Military Tract, and the later Bateman and Selby volumes, tended at least to promote the illusion of noteworthy local participation in information gathering and compilation.[7]

The resulting volumes, of course, were assembled almost according to a formula. In the early pages, much emphasis was given to an inventory of a county's natural resources. Pioneer life was described in long and loving detail, and the information that was gathered on it was important. Most of it was taken from otherwise soon-to-be-irretrievable reminiscences by surviving early settlers, either through what amounted to early oral history techniques or from detailed letters sent in response to the equivalent of standardized questionnaires. I have seen a letter fifty pages long that was sent to the Mercer County centennial history committee by a pioneer of the 1830's who had later moved to Oregon.[8] Pages and pages of original county documents were reprinted, depicting the early labors of county government officials—the county commissioners in the years before 1848, and the county supervisors thereafter. Church and school foundings were given close and significant attention, as were the individual histories of cities, towns, and townships. And a major source of profit for the promoters was to be found in the biographical sections of every volume, taking up as much as a third of the pages, and consisting of sketches of the lives of the major subscribers and sometimes their local ancestors, replete with engravings of the most affluent among them, sometimes line drawings of their homes, farms, and places of buiness.

Usually it is in the case of the biographical sections that present day risibilities are aroused about these histories. Filiopietism and an almost intolerable smugness are invariably revealed there, along with important insights into values that were dominant among the subscribers at the time of compilation—such values as might be symbolized by devotion to the Republican party and the Union cause during the Civil War; the kind of self-sufficiency revealed by reliance on a "good, common school education," families with ten children; farming as a way of life; material progress, as shown in big houses (including in some rural cases imitation manor houses, depictions of which are somewhat disquieting in volumes in which Jeffersonian simplicity was elsewhere celebrated), and by implication at least a scorn for the unsuccessful. Some of the problems involved in putting together a biographical section with the speed that was required are suggested in the case of a Brink's volume. One of Brink's subscribers had refused to pay a sum he owed as he was not satisfied with the portrait that appeared in the

Courtesy of the Gordon-Vestal Collection, Western Illinois University Libraries.
Thomas Gregg, author of the first history of Hancock County in 1880.

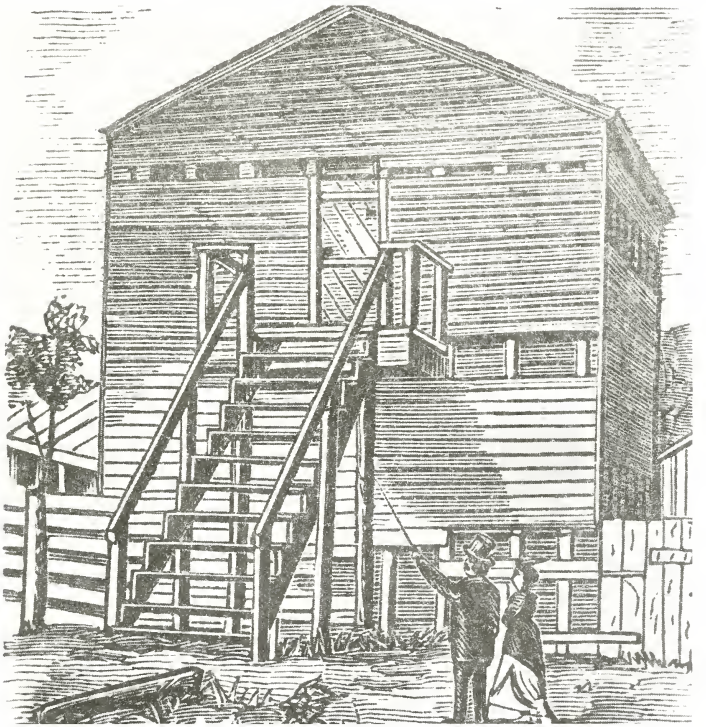
book. The likeness, he said, might be taken for almost anyone but himself. A local editor good-naturedly commented:

> Most of our readers in this county will remember Mr. Frazier, as the humorous gentleman who solicited biographical sketches, obituary notices, pictures, farm scenery, &c., for Brink, McCormick & Co. If the biographies were cast in the same mold; and the pig's tails were of the same length and all turned in the same direction; and if the same croquet party appeared simultaneously in all the front door yards of the country residences; if all the shrubbery and trees are as alike as two peas; and if the same little dog plays with the same little ball in all parts of the county at the same time; and if the portraits resemble creoles and mullattoes, and if Old Joe cannot be distinguished from Thos Kennedy; and if the subscribers cannot find their own land;—if, we say, all these things occur; it is certainly no fault of Mr. Frazier's. His duty was to take contracts at the highest possible rate and retain his commission, and by a careful diagnosis of that smile of his we doubt not that he received his full per cent.[9]

Of course the biases that existed in a community at the time a history was compiled were not restricted to the biographical section of the book. They tended to permeate the entire volume, to the extent, peculiar to the genre, that much of importance was concealed as was revealed. This was particularly true in the treatment of religious and ethnic groups, though it is to the credit of later compilers that the ferocity, disdain or neglect of earlier generations was not always carried on. For example, in most centinnial histories of Western Illinois, the truly religious people were Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, and perhaps Campbellite or Congregationalist. Mormonism, most people believed, was a heresy led by a madman who caused a lot of trouble in Hancock County. Yankees and Southerners might have been in conflict at one time but all was harmony now; other ethnic groups were not present or were barely mentioned. In 1835, for instance, we are told that McDonough County contained 2,862 souls and six Negroes.[10] Yet Perry's 1912 history of Knox County contains an especially good sketch of Roman Catholicism in Galesburg, and notes more briefly the existence of congregations of Christian Scientists and members of at least the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Special chapters were devoted to the Irish and Swedes in the county, and in another chapter the author was able to allow that "In fact, when we come to consider the different races that have their homes here, the negro race is of scarcely less importance than any other races."[11]

The smugness that permeates the biographical sections is especially visible throughout the centennial volumes. The reader is made aware that virtues once present in pioneer days were now gone; that pioneer life was characterized by "rough hospitality, hearty feeling, and brotherhood," but unfortunately "there was life and society then, which now is not to be found.[12] In the Fulton County centennial volume, those who could not endure frontier conditions and left were savagely denominated "weaklings," whereas "The men who stayed, who were willing to endure privations, belonged to a different guild; they were heroes every one. . . ."[13]

Also lacking in almost all cases is any sense of development over time, or of process, between the earliest settlement and the compilation of a history. The compilers simply did not know how to

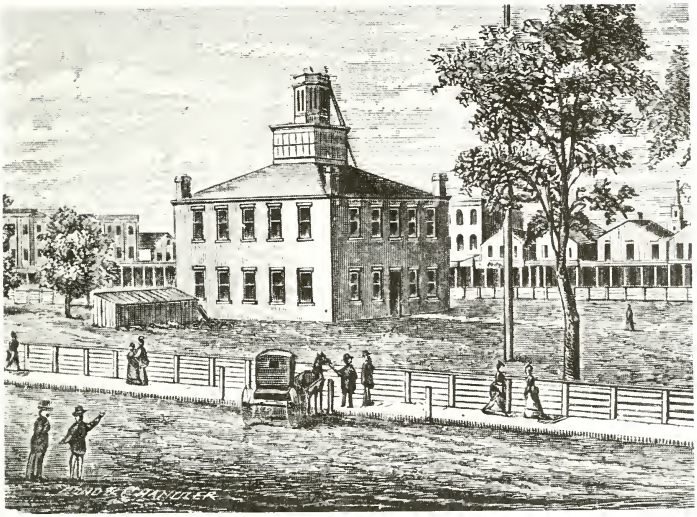


First Jail, Knoxville.

manage this, hence they tended to be anecdotal. They emphasized notable events, catastrophes, or firsts. The Black Hawk War was prominent, but so also were floods, lost children in the wilderness, the Big Snow if 1830, and public hangings, which probably received more attention than they deserved. Conversely, hardly any notice was given to factional conflicts among the respectables of a county, at least within the lifetimes of most of those involved. Robert Dykstra has noted this phenomenon and calls it the "taboo on divisiveness."[14] In the Knox County centennial history, for instance, one must read carefully to find out that Galesburg had been wet for several years in 1877, to the obvious mortification of the compilers of that volume.[15] We are told in the centennial McDonough County history only of a crisis in anti-Civil War draft activity, involving the shooting of a Federal provost marshal, and nothing of what went on before the crisis.[16] And not until the 1908 Bateman and Selby history of Fulton County was the wide-ranging anti-war opposition in that county detailed.[17]

Similarly, though reverent attention was given to founders and first settlers in these volumes and to the relics of the heroic age which had survived, this veneration was given to the point of obscuring the motives of some of them. Allan Bogue has revealed how much this was done in Iowa county history treatments of land claim associations, petty speculative enterprises devoted to protecting their members' extra-legal or illegal claims on public land, which were depicted by the historians as prime examples of the pioneer tendency to create self-governing institutions in the wilderness.[18] One is surprised to find reference to claim clubs in the Military Tract only in the Mercer County centennial history. In Mercer County the authors were vague about what could be telling particulars.[19] In a small way there is comparable concealment in treatments of the founding of Galesburg and Knox College. There was nothing illegal about the land deals of the founders, but that they were motivated by speculative as well as altruistic concerns got short shrift in the traditional treatments.

How is it that I have come to terms with Western Illinois county histories if it is so easy to fault them? I believe that the greatest value lies in the earliest histories in the genre, the centennial histories. Almost all of the generation of histories that followed either plagiarized these works unmercifully or else were caricatures of them, possessing none or little of the inspiration or motivation that lay behind the early books. There is obvious value in the centennial volumes as source material for the historian in that if properly evaluated they contain details of the early settlement process that exist nowhere else. Such would not have been



First Courthouse, McDonough County.

McDonough County Courthouse, completed in 1869.

preserved had these volumes not been written. They also contain names in profusion. In many respects that was their purpose, to commemorate the founders, and to advertise the spiritual descendents of the founders who had subscribed to the publication of the books. There is much questionable material here of course, but again, much information not found elsewhere. The quantitatively-oriented historical researcher who seeks biographical data on individuals active before the Federal Census began to collect rather detailed personal information in 1850 has almost nowhere else to look. And the long, seemingly arid, verbatim reproductions of county documents, under such heads as "Important Labors of the County Commissioners Court," likewise contain material often available nowhere else—given the frequent proclivities of county clerks to pitch out the archives, or the occasional tragic inclinations of court houses to go up in smoke.

But the discerning reader can be taught even more, too, for the centennial histories were celebrations to an optimistic generation that sincerely believed in progress, and of the bringing of order and stability to the Western Illinois woods and prairies. The frequent concern with violence shows this, but more importantly the reproduced early documents depict just that process, especially in their concern with the establishment of civilizing institutions as represented by courts, juries, county offices, peacekeeping machinery, and even the tax-collecting apparatus necessary to sustain it all. The crowning achievement, symbolizing not only the triumph of civilization and stability but also the permanence of a community, was the erection of a court house. The 1878 McDonough County history contains a quite detailed account of the planning, construction and dedication of the restored building.[20]

Equally important is the emphasis in these volumes on the establishment of churches and schools. Mere peacekeeping was understood to be inadequate in bringing order to the frontier. Churches and schools were recognized as agencies necessary to inculcate morality and orderly behavior. They were essentially voluntary associations which had to carry out this task in an era of relatively weak and minimal government. It is also partly in this sense that the later county histories fall short, for the symbolic special importance of schools and churches was somewhat lost on their compilers. To these aspiring writers the schools and churches tended to be merely the first institutions on lists containing such others as libraries, banks, hotels, waterworks, fraternal orders, agricultural societies and chambers of commerce, which together simply betokened development, material prosperity, and growth. It is possible to accuse the compilers of the centennial histories of a

kind of normlessness in their inability to assign scales of significance, which seems to be present in what looks like disordered aggregations of unrelated material, but a closer look shows that the norms are there. They are categorical, and they may not be relevant to more contemporary scales of value.

Furthermore, it may be that the appearance of the first round of county histories in time for the national centennial was coincidental with something else. Don Doyle, who has just pubished a model community study of Jacksonville, Illinois, and who has also come to terms with county histories, suggests that the centennial volumes might be statements of communities' reconciliations with themselves. It was reasonably clear by the years after the Civil War just what was to be the future measure of Western Illinois counties. It was clear which ones would contain burgeoning municipalities and which would not, clear which would be primarily agricultural and which would provide a wider variety of options for their inhabitants. Doyle suggests that this post-war acceptance by communities of their status was symbolized by a glorification of their past, which was especially important as the original settlers were conspicuously passing from the stage.[21] By implication at least, an affirmation existed that a county had turned out to be exactly what its founders had wanted it to become. Only occasionally does one note acknowledgement in centennial histories of communities that had failed, usually for uncontrollable reasons—they were "missed by the railroad," or were located on land "still held by old speculators."

To go beyond Doyle, however, it strikes me that this recognition of the typical community's rather qualified success was balanced by the tremendous emphasis on biography for which these volumes are famous if not notorious. The individuals who were mentioned and whose life stories were told, were quite often survivors of the pioneering process, both in the sense that they had lived a long time, and that they had stayed in the counties in question. We now know from many demographic studies of frontier communities that the survivors and persisting settlers were a very small minority of all settlers, that a high population turnover was the norm in new communities. What characterized the biographical sketches of the survivors was a repeated emphasis on material success derived from hard work, in spite of considerable initial adversity. In other words, a community's indifferent success was masked by tales of individual success. And perhaps even more significantly, the centennial histories are important nationalizing statements, for they affirmed that individuals could succeed in any sort of nurturing American community—successful or not.

County histories made sense when the pioneers were still alive to congratulate themselves and be congratulated, and while the county remained a significant political entity or a viable human community. There were several efforts to reproduce the genre, indeed to start a third wave, in Western Illinois in 1968 and 1976, but as has been suggested, in most such instances the deep-rooted and culturally-defined enthusiasm of a century ago was diluted by time. Treatments of special topics in some of these recent volumes are commendable; the chapters on agriculture and education in the 1976 Mercer County volume come to mind. Most of the resulting productions, however, possessed little more order and form than their predecessors.[22] The municipality now bulks much larger in the lives of most of us, and municipal or community history makes a good deal more contemporary sense as an enterprise for interested and talented amateurs. The same is true in respect to the pursuit of even more specialized topics such as the physical uniqueness every town or county possesses in its architecture—pursuits such as Knox County Historic Sites is now undertaking, and the Galesburg Historical Society is presently considering. Furthermore, local oral history archives can and ought to be established, and important information can be gained through the systematic pursuit of family history and the development of local family history collections. Much encouragement should be given to such activities as these and it is hoped that, through their expression, today's generation can preserve, build on, and perpetuate the local historiographical tradition first undertaken by the centennial county historians.

NOTES

[1] Malcolm J. Rohrbough, *The Trans-Appalachian Frontier* (New York, 1978), p. 121.

[2] S.J. Clarke, *History of McDonough County, Illinois* (Springfield, 1878). Continental Historical Company, *History of McDonough County, Illinois* (Springfield, 1885).

[3] W. Selden Gale and George Candee Gale, eds., *Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois and Knox County* (Chicago, 1899). Albert J. Perry, *History of Knox County, Illinois*. 2 Vols. (Chicago, 1912).

[4] H.H. Hill and Company, *History of Mercer County* (Chicago, 1882).

[5] Betty and Raymond Saahn, "Wesley Raymond Brink, History Huckster," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, 58 (1965), p. 117.

[6] Ibid., pp. 124-126.

[7] Ibid., pp. 128-130.

[8] Abraham Miller letter, n.d. In 1972, a copy of this letter was in the possession of Mr. Stanley Andrews, Altona, Illinois.

[9] Spahn and Spahn, "Wesley Raymond Brink," pp. 123-124, quoting *Edwardsville Intelligencer*, October 27, 1875.

[10] Clarke, *History of McDonough County*, p. 76.

[11] Perry, *History of Knox County*, I, 666-674, 714-747, 760-766. The quotation is on p. 760.

[12] Continental Historical Co., *History of McDonough County*, p. 83. Charles C. Chapman and Company, *History of Knox County, Illinois* (Chicago, 1878), p. 245.

[13] Charles C. Chapman and Company, *History of Fulton County, Illinois* (Peoria, 1879), p. 222.

[14] Robert R. Dykstra, *The Cattle Towns* (New York, 1968), p. 363.

[15] Chapman, *History of Knox County*, Chap. XIX.

[16] Clarke, *History of McDonough County*, pp. 167-81.

[17] Jesse Heylin, ed., *Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois and History of Fulton County* (Chicago, 1908), pp. 762y-762aa.

[18] Allan G. Bogue, *From Prairie to Corn Belt* (Chicago, 1963), 29-39; Allan G. Bogue, "The Iowa Claim Clubs: Symbol and Substance," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 45 (1958), 231-253.

[19] Hill, *History of Mercer County*, pp. 80, 279-281, 707, 747.

[20] Clarke, *History of McDonough County*, pp. 247-256.

[21] Don H. Doyle, *The Social Order of a Frontier Community* (Urbana, 1978), pp. 255-259.

[22] Daniel T. Johnson, *History of Mercer County, Illinois, 1882-1976* (Aledo, 1976).

LINDSAY'S 1908 WALKING TRIP

Owen Hawley

Vachel Lindsay's three walking adventures, which he made as dream peddler and Franciscan troubadour, were at heart liberating crusades. Not concerned primarily with the world of nature, Lindsay was more interested in ideas: how he could offer his, absorb new ones, and exist through them. Safety valves which allowed him to deal with frustration and exhaustion, his trips on foot in 1906, 1908 and 1912, during which the wanderer exchanged his poetry for food and a night's lodging, also provided fulfillment of his pleasure in walking, an extension of his rhythmic sense. And they helped him toward that independence which comes from freedom.

Although Lindsay's three principal biographers[1] emphasize the significance of his tramping trips, all three devote more space to the one he made from his Springfield, Illinois, home to the Far West in 1912 than to those he took from Florida to Kentucky in 1906 and from New York City to Ohio in 1908. When *Adventures While Preaching the Gospel of Beauty* (which covers his 1912 journey) appeared in 1914, it was given twice as many review notices as *A Handy Guide for Beggars* (Lindsay's record of his 1906 and 1908 tramps, published in November, 1916). In addition, the 1914 book went through three more Macmillan impressions in 1916, 1921 and 1928, while the *Handy Guide* received only one more, a second in 1923. And in 1968, Lindsay's account of his 1912 walking tour became the main item in *Adventures, Rhymes & Designs.*[2]

Yet Nicholas Vachel Lindsay (as he was known before 1915) might have wished somewhat more emphasis on his *Handy Guide*. Writing to Howard Willard Cook, he noted:

> I walked in the South in the spring of 1906, in the East in the spring of 1908 and the West in the spring of 1912. There is a definite progress of ideas in the accounts of the three regions. Please remember 'The Handy Guide for Beggars' begins the story. People get so very wide of the mark I am perhaps getting finicky on this matter of chronology.[3]

Vachel Lindsay in 1912. From Edgar Lee Masters, *Vachel Lindsay: A Poet in America.*

Further support to allow a tip of the scales toward the *Handy Guide's* favor appears in Theodore Maynard's 1924 essay "Vachel Lindsay: A Daniel in a Den of Buddhists." Although Maynard writes that both the *Handy Guide* and *Adventures* "should be carefully studied as an introduction to [Lindsay's] poetry," the excerpt he quotes, labeling it "an exquisite prose passage," is from "Death, the Devil and Human Kindness," the fourth sketch in the second half of the *Handy Guide:*

> I met the lady Life, once upon a time, long ago. She had innocent blue eyes. Alone in the field I felt free to kiss the palm of her little hand, under the shadow of the corn.
>
> Once, under that tassel, under those dangerous blades, I met Life, and for good reason, bade her good-by. After her solemn words of parting, she called me back, and mischievously fed me, from the pocket of her gingham apron, crab apples and cranberries. Ever since that time those fruits have been bitter delights to my superstitious fancy.[5]

And Maynard concludes: "the sense of elvish and elusive wonder contained there is the chief thing that Lindsay was put into this world to express."[6]

Perhaps, then, more attention should be paid to Lindsay's *Handy Guide* and specifically to its last ninety-four pages, those on which appear the record of his "mendicant pilgrimage in the East" from late April to mid-May, 1908.

In the spring of 1908, Lindsay's five-year apprenticeship to New York City was ending. It had begun in the fall of 1903 when he enrolled as a student at the New York School of Art on West Fifty-Seventh Street. Money for his time in New York had come from home, from relatives, and from small jobs. Although he had submitted a dozen, *The Critic*, in its issues for March, 1904 and April, 1905, had printed only two of his illustrated poems: "The Queen of Bubbles" and "At Noon on Easter-Day." He had also tried, in 1905, to peddle for pennies in the city's shops copies of his first two privately printed, illustrated poems, "We Who Are Playing Tonight" and "The Cup of Paint." On June 1, 1907 *The Outlook* had carried "The Man Under the Yoke," a prose narrative based on an episode in his 1906 hike. During the winter of 1907-08, in exchange for free meals, Lindsay and some friends had drawn wall paintings for George Becker's Pig and Goose Restaurant at 355 West Fifty-Eighth Street.

In early April of 1908 Lindsay was concluding another winter lecture series on "Dominating Personalities in History" (which he illustrated with his historical character posters) at the West Side YMCA on West Fifty-Seventh Street, continuing to fill diaries with

details of the visions he had been experiencing, and conducting groups through the Metropolitan Museum of art as an adjunct to his lectures. Out of his Y course had come a new poem, its concluding line at the end of some stanzas, "God Help Us To Be Brave," providing the working title for what later evolved into "The Heroes of Time" and "Litany of Heroes."[7] This poem's stanzas presented "twenty-six representative citizens of the world from Rameses II to Roosevelt."

Using money earned from Y teaching and from running an ad from Becker's restaurant inside the back cover, Lindsay had 500 copies of "God Help Us To Be Brave" printed within 9 1/2 by 4 1/2 inch decorative green wallpaper covers. The other privately printed poem he financed with these resources was "The Last Song of Lucifer," which he had started work on as a Hiram College student in the late 1890's. It was printed inside red and green wallpaper covers measuring 6 1/2 by 4 3/4.[8]

Worn by New York City's buffets, eager to build new friendships through which to share his ideas, Lindsay heard for the second time the whispering call of spring in the countrysie. Carrying copies of "God Help Us To Be Brave" and "The Last Song of Lucifer" (as well as some of "The Tree of Laughing Bells" left over from his 1906 trip), to exchange for bed and board, a few necessary toilet articles and an automobile road map, Lindsay, age 28, left New York with less than two dollars in his pocket, about 3:30 on Tuesday afternoon, April 28, 1908, stepping due west.

A disciple of St. Francis, Lindsay kept a road diary of his nineteen-day journey from New York City to Hiram, Ohio.[9] In it he put down his itinerary, names of people he met, and notes on his experiences—all grist for later prose sketches. Four years after the trip's end, he used his diary notes and his memory to construct the narratives which *The Twentieth Century* ran in the summer of 1912 and which he in turn reworked in 1916 for the last half of the *Handy Guide.*[10]

In the preface to the *Handy Guide*, Lindsay stated his Rules of the Road, which he attempted to follow on all three of his walking adventures:

1. Keep away from the Cities;
2. Keep away from the railroads;
3. Have nothing to do with money and carry no baggage;
4. Ask for dinner about quarter after eleven;
5. Ask for supper, lodging and breakfast about quarter to five.
6. Travel alone;
7. Be neat, deliberate, chaste and civil;
8. Preach the Gospel of Beauty.[11]

After a ride on the Twenty-Third Street ferry to Hoboken, Lindsay stayed at the Salvation Army in Newark his first night out, Tuesday, April 28. While he found accommodations there less than satisfactory, he reserved his strongest ire for the treatment he was subjected to the following night at the Presbyterian Mission in Morristown, New Jersey, "the richest village in the United States."[12] This Christian hostelry larded out such religious righteousness that it came to stand for Lindsay as a symbol of sham.[13] And his experience there became the subject of "A Temple Made With Hands," the first sketch in the last half of the *Handy Guide*.[14]

Between his putting the happening down in his road diary and his transforming it into a narrative for publication, Lindsay wrote a four-page letter which he apparently never mailed. In it he reduced with Swiftian vengeance those who had perpetrated indignities upon him. Labeling it "The letter of the roaring lion," he wrote:

June 2, 1908

To the Holy Person or Persons
In Charge of the Mission at Morristown:

One night, two months ago, no—it was about May the first—I was a stranger, and ye took me in. According to regulations, I split kindling for my night's lodging. I listened to sermons on "Blessed are the Meek" (to establish my social standing). After those sermons the saints and respectables disappeared, and a vile stupid creature was given the whole job of applying your Christianity. The villian [sic] forced me to use another man's wash-rag, without even wringing it out. He would not give me time to bathe properly. He sneered when I did not want to use a towel that was black as the soul of a scavenger. He would not give me my clean underwear to sleep in. He insisted on fumigating *that*. For sleeping robe he gave me pajamas that would have made Cain ashamed of himself if he would have forced them upon Able [sic]. He gave me a bed that would have hurt the feelings of a dirt eater, and their beds were white. Nor was I sneered at for wanting to be clean, nor condemned as "too fancy" when I slept in my own undershirt.

The hospitality on the Highway of my God was natural and human, where the last treasure is divided, where the kindliness of the hearth is opened, come what may. Neither were sermons preached on "Blessed are the Meek." Everything was given, the fat of the land was given, I say, with natural human grace. Your outrageous Charity was given with blasphemous prayers.

Gentlemen, Gentlemen, is it enough to give a man Christ's white words; then give him a black trough to sleep in? Is it

enough to say to him "Blessed are the Meek," and give him a bed that would shame the swine of Gadarea? Call a solemn assembly! Wash you, make you clean! Let there be less kindling split in the basement, and more sheets laundried in the top story!

And now you are indignant. You say "Oh is this your gratitude for food and lodging?" I assure you sirs, your mission is socially superfluous. I went forth from your place into the highway of my God, who dwelleth not in Missions made by hypocrites. On that highway, gentlemen, I was a welcome guest, at thirty six homes at which I was an utter stranger. Some of these were so wealthy they could afford bath tubs and good books; in that case they gave me good eating, honest friendship, clean towels, and a white bed. Some of them were so poor that the baby could not afford trousers nor a substitute for trousers; yet in these I was led to tables full of good things. Is it enough to go home to your white pillows while a mongrel cur, that could not justly administer a refuge for lame cats, is given charge of the men to whom you have preached so sweetly?

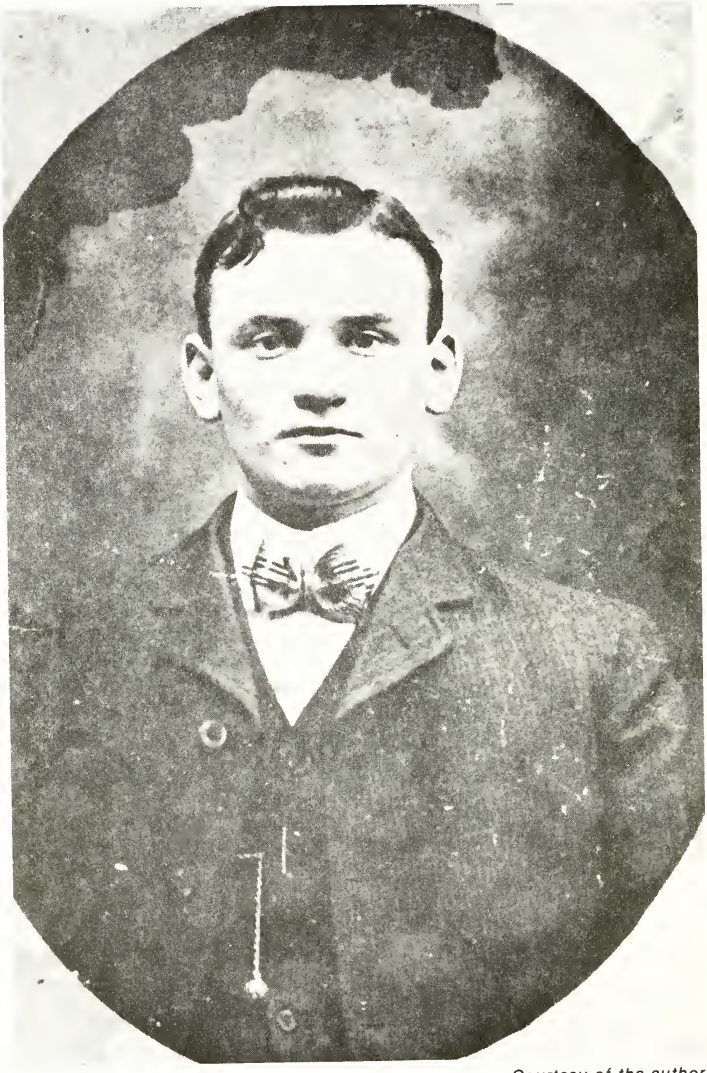
Shame! shame, shame! I was a stranger, and ye took me in. I was naked, and ye clothed me (in vile pajamas). And all this grotesque folly, this Devil's comedy was done in the Ineffable Name. I wish for you the worst—that some day you may be a penniless literary person, and that you may be forced to use the hospitality of your own Mission.

Yours in the Name of the Devil,
who is after all—a gentleman—

Very sincerely
Nicholas Vachel Lindsay,
Gentleman Adventurer[15]

223 South 6th St., Springfield, Illinois

But such an experience as that at Morristown was the exception.[16] For the most part, Lindsay was treated with courtesy and generosity. Such was the case his third night on the road, which he spent near Glen Gardner at the home of Lutheran pastor John J. Hummer and his wife, the fourth night at the J. H. Slack house, Troutdale Farms near Bloomsbury, and the fifth (his first in Pennsylvania) at Lafayette College, Easton. The audience of Lafayette men, buoyed up with a session of college yells, gave Lindsay's recitation of parts of his "Last Song of Lucifer" and "The Tree of Laughing Bells" an enthusiastic reception, which brought back his days at Hiram. It was the kind of mutual exchange that most delighted Lindsay.[17]



Courtesy of the author.

William H. Rankin, proprietor of the hotel at Dents Run, Pennsylvania.

Leaving Easton, he made his way across the Pocono Plateau where he enjoyed the hospitality of Pennsylvania-German farm families. Descending the far side of the Poconos, Lindsay reached the Wilkes-Barre coal mining country dominated by gray slag heaps. He spent his seventh night near Shickshinny at the last in a double row of uniformly drab company houses. Following supper at the kitchen table with the miner, his wife and two young sons, Lindsay provided his own explosion in the front room (backed by sounds of dynamite outside) with his recitation of "God Help Us To Be Brave." Again he found a responsive audience: there was good talk about the people of the region; they would remember Lindsay's heroes.[18]

For the next five, rain-filled days, Lindsay continued west across the Appalachians, following the Susquehannah, trading copies of his poems for meals, picking up mail awaiting him at Williamsport, and occasionally hopping into the caboose of a New York Central freight train to dry his clothes. Somewhat over half way between Williamsport and DuBois, Lindsay found lodging for his twelfth night at the hotel in Dents Run operated by William H. Rankin. That Lindsay hoped but was not allowed to include that evening as one of the sketches in his *Handy Guide* is clear from the existence of a three-page manuscript on the front page of which he wrote "omit," "thin," and "make rich & deep."

Snared by the Susquehannah

It was a tiny hotel in a Pennsylvania lumber town. Mine host was surly. Though I was admitted to the family table, he would not let me gather his flock together for a few moments afterward for a discourse on the Holiness of Beauty. He would not let me give him my little pamphlet-poem nor present it to his wife nor his son nor his daughter nor his son-in-law nor his grandson. If I had not been dead tired I would have sought the better hospitality of the thunder-storm.

I had been walking in the rain for five days. This was the evening of the fifth. The first and second days were penetrating drizzle and mist. The third was a gentle rain with patches of sun. The fourth and fifth days it thundered and poured. This weather had cured a cough that had clung to me two months when I had been properly sheltered in the big city. But the healing of my body was not the only profit. The elements had ministered to my spirit as well. When one's heart is ready—the rain is a Baptism. Though ones [sic] coat is damp and his way is through the mire—yea though the torent [sic] pours over the breast as though that breast were bare—the chill body raises the soul to an unearthly elation. Then it is that the spirit steps firmly in the secret paths of power.

But speaking after the manner of men—I had been snared by the Susquehannah—and in a curious way. I had set myself to walk west—and once started along that river I could not escape without returning. I could not climb those muddy hills on either bank. I could not break through to the hospitable agricultural folk among whom it had been my plan to forage, and I, and the railroad as well—clung to the river in order to progress. I walked the ties and put up at little lumber villages.

And my heart had been leaping with delight and laughter over what seemed then a most romantic discovery.

The first night I asked free accomodation [sic] at a private house as was my want. They informed me it was Pennsylvania Law that the traveller without money must be provided for by the hotel. I have never consulted a Pennsylvania legal light as to whether this is so. But for four evenings the landlords gave me free accomodation [sic] instantly: clean beds—good meals and no ugly looks and allowed me to recite for those who wanted to listen.

But there was a worm in the soul of the fifth landlord. There was a mortgage or an old feud or a chronic indigestion or a family skeleton or a gnawing conscience to keep him from a moment's peace. He had many blessings. He was still middle aged, young for a grandfather. His wife was comely and serene. His son in law appeared to be a likely sort. His beautiful daughter and her dear baby would have cheered up the wretchedest household. But none of these things cheered him.

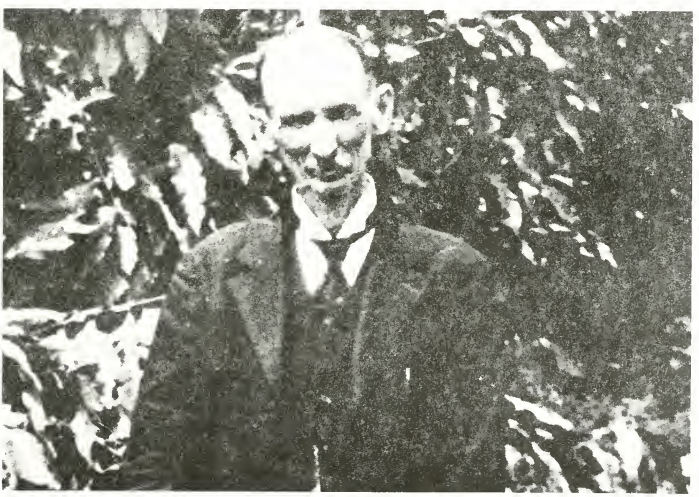
He combined a village grocery with his hostelrie. In front of his counter—after supper—he was the evil genius of the scene. I had not made a speech for twenty four hours. I was eager to exhort—to quote the poets—to quote the scripture. You have had the feeling—dear reader—in Endeavor Society, in Y.M.C.A. prayer-meeting—at the free for all debating society. The loafers round the store were willing to be entertained—if not uplifted. But the Landlord, figeting [sic] with rage hurried me to my room. Once more he returned the Brochure I had thrust into his hand. He locked the door and went downstairs.

The room had two beds. I took the one with the most covers—first stretching my wet clothes on a chair.

When I was almost asleep the door was unlocked and a towering fellow I had never before seen came in with a lamp in one hand and a shot gun in the other. He was followed by a red-eyed huntingdog. The man locked the door and put the key into his trousers pocket. Then he took off his indispensables, threw them on the floor—and said to the dog "Watch them pants." The animal tangled himself up in the suspenders and went to sleep. The man put the gun within reach of his pillow, extinguished the lamp and piled into bed. Next morning the door was open. Dog, man and gun were gone. I had my fine Italian revenge. I pinned the rejected brochure upon my pillow. On the leaves thus exposed I wrote: Respectfully presented to my host J. K ---, in gratitude for supper —lodging—a locked door and a sentinel. This book is at present worth 25 cents. In ten years it will be worth $25000. Still I do not hesitate to give it. Would I might do more.

Courtesy of the author.

The Sayers Store at Cranberry, Pennsylvania.



Courtesy of the author.

William H. Sayers, the grocer-undertaker.

> I have no doubt breakfast was waiting for me down stairs. But I left without any more of their bread and salt. I felt on friendlier terms with rain and the railroad ties.
>
> In an hour the sun shone. The roads began to dry. By noon I had reached the water-shed, was over the divide, was crossing a wind-swept plateau. As a matter of fact my rainy season was ended. Behind me was the Susquehannah with its dark hills and its cindery railroad and its good and bad landlords. Around me was the farm country and every farmer in the United States is my dear and intimate friend.
>
> Thus it is always upon the road. Neither rain nor misfortune nor misunderstanding last too long. The road is a place of singing.[19]

As he walked on for the next two days through DuBois and Clarion, Lindsay was sometimes refused lodging and given either meager or ample meals. He captured his greeting at Cranberry, which he reached at noon on his sixteenth day, in the opening of the fourth sketch in the last half of the *Handy Guide*: "Death, the Devil, and Human Kindness."

> At noon your servant was on the front step of a store near a cross-roads called Cranberry, Pennsylvania. The store was on the south side of the way by which I had come. I sat looking along wagon tracks leading north, little suspecting I should take that route soon.
>
> On one side overhead was the sign: "Fred James, Undertaker." On the other: "Fred James, Grocer."
>
> "And so," I thought, "I am going to meet, face to face, one of the eternal powers. He may call himself Fred James all he pleases. His real name is Death."[20]

More interested in the essence of his adventures, Lindsay often took a story teller's license with names.[21] In actual life the grocer-undertaker was William Henry Sayers, who, with his wife Lizzie Barber, ran this establishment. Meditating on "the mystery of Life and Death and cranberries,"[22] Lindsay shared with Sayers his "point of view as a religious mendicant,"[23] gave him a copy of "The Tree of Laughing Bells," and in turn was given lunch and directions to his next destination, Oil City.

About two that afternoon Lindsay reached the edge of a cliff that descended into the ugliness and confusion of the oil refining district near Oil City and Franklin. His description of the area's hideousness anticipated H. L. Mencken's 1927 essay on the horrors of the region between Pittsburgh and Greensburg.[24] As Lindsay looked at the belching coke ovens, he was almost convinced he could smell the odor of burning ghosts:

> Dying sinners snared and corrupted by Oil City are carried here when the city has done its work.... Body and soul they are disintegrated by the venomous oil; they crumble away in the town of oil, and here in the town of ovens, the fragments are burned with unquenchable fire.[25]

And he "wondered how many had lived and died there when they would have preferred some other place."[26]

Eager to leave the blighted area, Lindsay accepted a ride on an Italian fruit peddler's wagon. Its driver, who "looked like the social secretary of the Black Hand," soon made him wish he had not accepted the offer. First the peddler purposely drove over a lame cat who "died without a shriek," then he hurled baseball-sized rocks at a dog which was barking at his wagon. Moreover he actually drove Lindsay out of his way, though by the time the episode was over, Lindsay had reached him and the "Devil" gave him three oranges as they waved good-by.[27]

Just what night the next encounter, third in the "Death, the Devil, and Human Kindness" section, occurred is unclear from either Lindsay's road diary or his *Handy Guide*. Earlier in the book he admitted, "Sometimes a considerable happening is introduced that came the day before, or two days after. In some cases the events of a week are told in reverse order."[28]

This sketch had its setting at the farmhouse of an elderly widower "on the edge of the second cornfield." At first Lindsay's host seemed listless and devoid of any element of dynamic personality, but his considerations were so great that Lindsay came to call him "Mr. Humankindness." Baked potatoes smothered in butter, the only food served, so delighted Lindsay that he wrote, "the first warm potato tasted like peacocks' tongues, the next like venison, and the next like ambrosia, and the next like a good warm potato with butter on it."[29] Though there was no bed in the house, each man slept in opposite corners on floors that were white with cleanliness and covered with a quantity of equally clean rag rugs. There was a clean blanket, and his host had rolled up his new overcoat to serve as his guest's pillow. Good fresh air came through an open window on a wind that "cried Life, life, life!"[30] Such hospitality echoed the generosity Lindsay had known one evening near the Florida-Georgia border on his 1906 walking adventure, about which he had written, "This man had nothing, and he gave me half of it, and we had abundance."[31]

Starting out another morning, Lindsay observed, "the road, almost dry after several days of rain . . . gay with butterfly-haunted puddles . . . a complacent cat in a doorway, that should have been named 'scrambled eggs and milk,' so mongrel was his overcoat . . ."

Courtesy of the author.

Jessie Cecelia Sanford, age eleven.

and "a philosophical grasshopper reading inscriptions in a lonely cemetery."[32] Absorbing it all, he concluded, "Splendor after splendor rolled in upon the highway from the four corners of heaven."[33]

Close to eight in the evening of his sixteenth day, he came to the turn-of-the-century farmhouse between Franklin and Polk of Courtney S. Sanford, his wife Mary Roenigk, their two children, and Sanford's elderly parents, William and Mary Ann Johnson Sanford. His overnight stay with them became the final chapter in the *Handy Guide*: "The Old Gentleman with the Lantern (and the People of his Household)."[34]

With the exception of the grandmother (who later grew a bit more friendly), this family accorded Lindsay warm hospitality. In the course of the evening, Courtney Sanford, who went about the area drilling oil wells, returned home unexpectedly. The scene of joyous confusion was highlighted by his gift for his daughter of an extraordinary doll.

Called "Gretchen-Cecelia" in the *Handy Guide*, the Sanford daughter was Jessie Cecelia, who would turn twelve on July 1, though Lindsay cast her as nine. The two became immediate friends: they told each other fairy tales, he gave her his "Tree of Laughing Bells," and when he left the next morning, she gave him "a tiny curl from the head of her doll that had truly, truly hair."[35]

Lindsay's walking diary contains the events which rounded out this adventure. Still averaging lifts of three miles a day, Lindsay was next given a ride in the rubber-tired buggy of a glove-drummer to the house of Clara Guilinger at Henderson where he had noon dinner. He stayed the seventeenth night (his last in Pennsylvania) at the house of English-born John Henry Rowe just west of Greenfield. After supper, though he had at first been assigned to sleep in the barn, when he read his poems the Rowes allowed him to spend the night in their home.

The next morning Lindsay walked into Ohio, staying the night at the Warren home of Hiram College friends, Dr. and Mrs. Harlan M. Page, and ending his nineteen-day adventure by greeting his younger sister Joy on the Hiram campus at two in the afternoon of May 16, 1908.

Brimming with ideas for writing and illustrating projects which were to make the years immediately ahead prolific, he caught a train home to Springfield. Drawing conclusions about the trip, he wrote in his diary on June 8:

> As long as I continue to do my best to write I am producing my reasonable share of this world's goods. I should give everyone

> as free access to my work as possible. In return I can ask of society bread, shelter and clothes. I should take pains to ask of those who can part with them easily. Be it here highly resolved that I am my own master henceforth.[36]

Lindsay's spiritual adventures on foot in the spring of 1908 had helped bring him to this plateau of liberation.

NOTES

[1] Edgar Lee Masters, *Vachel Lindsay: A Poet in America* (New York: Scribner's, 1935), Mark Harris, *City of Discontent: An Interpretive Biography of Vachel Lindsay* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1952) and Eleanor Ruggles, *The West-Going Heart: A Life of Vachel Lindsay* (New York: Norton, 1959). The earliest full-length biography of Lindsay was Albert Edmund Trombly, *Vachel Lindsay: Adventurer* (Columbia, Mo.: Lucas Brothers, 1929).

[2] *Adventures, Rhymes & Designs . . . by Vachel Lindsay* (New York: Eakins, 1968) contains *Adventures While Preaching the Gospel of Beauty,* drawings from *The Village Improvement Parade* and *Rhymes To Be Traded for Bread* (both of which Lindsay distributed on his 1912 trip) and an essay on Lindsay by Robert F. Sayre. Selections from *Adventures While Preaching the Gospel of Beauty* also appeared in *Walking in America*, edited by Donald Zochert (New York: Knopf, 1974), pp. 175-84.

[3] Quoted in Howard Willard Cook, *Our Poets of Today* (New York; Moffat, Yard, 1919), p. 63. Writing to Harriet Monroe, 12 October 1916, Lindsay stressed the *Handy Guide* sketches as forerunners to those in *Adventures*, and added that as a result he considered them "a little bolder...." *Poetry* Magazine Papers, 1912-1936, University of Chicago Library.

[4] Theodore Maynard, *Our Best Poets: English and American* (London: Brentano's, 1924), p. 188.

[5] Vachel Lindsay, *A Handy Guide for Beggars* (New York: Macmillan, 1916), pp. 161-162.

[6] Maynard, p. 189.

[7] Ruggles, pp. 128-129.

[8] "God Help Us To Be Brave" and "The Last Song of Lucifer," both 1908, were Lindsay's fourth and fifth privately printed publications. Enclosed in wallpaper wrappers, they do not contain any of his original drawings. His first three ("We Who Are Playing Tonight," "The Cup of Paint" and "The Tree of Laughing Bells," all 1905) do contain his illustations and designs.

[9] "The Adventures of an Amateur Mendicant," 1908 road diary. Nicholas Vachel Lindsay Collection, Clifton Waller Barrett Library, University of Virginia Library.

[10] In its issues for 1 June 1907, 2 and 9 January and 6 and 13 February 1909, and 7 Oct. 1911 *The Outlook* published six of the nine prose sketches based on Lindsay's 1906 walking trip which eventually made up the first half of the *Handy Guide*. Four early versions of the five prose sketches in the last half of the *Handy Guide* appeared in *Twentieth Century Magazine*, June through September, 1912, under the title "A Religious Mendicant."

[11] *Handy Guide*, p. viii. Lindsay elaborated on them in "Rules of the Road," *The American Magazine* (May 1912), pp. 54-59.

[12] *Handy Guide*, p. 115.

[13] Lindsay's "An Adventurer Gets Religion" (*War Bulletin Number Two*, 4 August 1909) was the earliest printed version of his second night's experience as well as the first open indication of the actual site.

[14] *Handy Guide*, pp. 115-132. "A Temple Made with Hands" was preceded by Lindsay's poem "In Lost Jerusalem" (a slightly altered version of his "Christ" in "God Help Us To Be Brave"). The *Handy Guide* contains fourteen poetic interludes: of the seven in each half, three had appeared, in slightly different versions, in "God Help Us To Be Brave," making a total of six poems from "God Help Us To Be Brave."

[15] This holograph letter, quoted completely for the first time with the permission of Nicholas Cave Lindsay, is in the author's collection. A similarly vitriolic, unsent letter (written from Spokane, 12 October 1927, to blast H. Augustine Smith of Boston University for wanting to set to music Lindsay's poem "Foreign Missions in Battle Array"), together with a copy of the three-line letter Lindsay sent instead, is in the *Poetry* Magazine papers, 1912-1936, University of Chicago Library. Writing to Anna Hempstead Branch from Easton, 1 May 1908, Lindsay gave a considerably subdued account of his overnight in Morristown; Anna Hempstead Branch Collection, William Allan Neilson Library, Smith College. The tone of the unsent letters of 1908 and 1927, together with that in parts of "Snared by the Susquehannah," indicates that Lindsay could indeed, when roused, shed his metaphorical Franciscan robes and deliver the stinging blow of a scorpion's tail.

[16] The sketches which open the two halves of the *Handy Guide* are total contrasts: "The Man Under the Yoke," in its warm compassion, is more like most of the *Handy Guide* narratives, while "A Temple Made with Hands" presents the exception.

[17] "On Being Entertained One Evening by College Boys," second sketch in the second half of the *Handy Guide*, pp. 135-136.

[18] Ruggles, pp. 132-133. "Near Shickshinny," third sketch in the last half of the *Handy Guide*, pp. 138-158.

[19] This holograph manuscript, quoted completely for the first time with the permission of Nicholas Cave Lindsay, is in the author's collection. Lindsay's 1916 letters to Harriet Brainard Moody indicate that this was possibly only one of several manuscripts Macmillan chose not to include in the *Handy Guide*. In letters written home while he was at Hiram College in May, 1908, Lindsay itemized ten possible stories from his just-completed trip. Nicholas Vachel Lindsay Collection, Clifton Waller Barrett Library, University of Virginia Library.

[20] *Handy Guide*, p. 161.

[21] *Handy Guide*, p. 96: "In the prose sketches in this book I have allowed myself a story-teller's license only a little."

[22] *Handy Guide*, p. 162. See also the passage from this section which Maynard praised: Notes 4-6 above.

[23] *Handy Guide*, p. 163.

[24] H. L. Mencken, "The Libido for the Ugly," *Prejudices: Sixth Series* (New York: Knopf, 1927), pp. 187-193.

[25] *Handy Guide*, p. 172.

[26] *Handy Guide*, p. 168.

[27] *Handy Guide*, pp. 169-173.

[28] *Handy Guide*, p. 96.

[29] *Handy Guide*, p. 175.

[30] *Handy Guide*, p. 177.

[31] "The Man Under the Yoke," *Handy Guide*, p. 13. See Note 16 above.

[32] *Handy Guide*, pp. 182-183.

[33] *Handy Guide*, pp. 183-184.

[34] *Handy Guide*, pp. 185-204.

[35] *Handy Guide*, p. 204. In his Foreward to *Springfield Town Is Butterfly Town* by Vachel Lindsay (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University, 1969), Pierre Dussert wrote: "Just open the *Handy Guide for Beggars*, and read the Gretchen-Cecelia story. You will see how easily, how spontaneously Lindsay could strike up a friendship with a child."

[36] Masters, p. 190.

IMITATIONS OF *SPOON RIVER*: AN OVERVIEW

Herb Russell

When Edgar Lee Masters' *Spoon River Anthology* first appeared on the American scene sixty-five years ago, it created almost overnight a literary sensation. There had never before been anything quite like these poems phrased in unadorned free verse except, perhaps, portions of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. Like Whitman's, the poems of Masters also aroused disputes concerning morality and the arts. On the one hand, literary critics accused him of showing too little respect for poetic rules; on the other, critics of several cloths felt Masters had written far too realistically about aspects of life which were inappropriate for verse.

The source of the problem was that Masters had viewed his *Spoon River* creations as people with no illusions left (for all his characters were dead and buried), and so he let them speak plainly in the "epitaphs" they seemed to fashion for themselves. Consider as example the simple honesty in this excerpt from one of the book's first epitaphs, that of a murderer named Hod Putt:

> Here I lie close to the grave
> Of Old Bill Piersol,
> Who grew rich trading with the Indians, and who
> Afterwards took the bankrupt law
> And emerged from it richer than ever.
> Myself grown tired of toil and poverty
> And beholding how Old Bill and others grew in wealth,
> Robbed a traveler one night near Proctor's Grove,
> Killing him unwittingly while doing so,
> For the which I was tried and hanged.[1]

A similar emphasis on plain truths rather than decorative ones also characterizes *Spoon River's* few collective assessments, as this example from the introductory poem shows.

Where are Ella, Kate, Mag, Lizzie and Edith,
The tender heart, the simple soul, the loud, the proud,
the happy one?—
All, all, are sleeping on the hill.

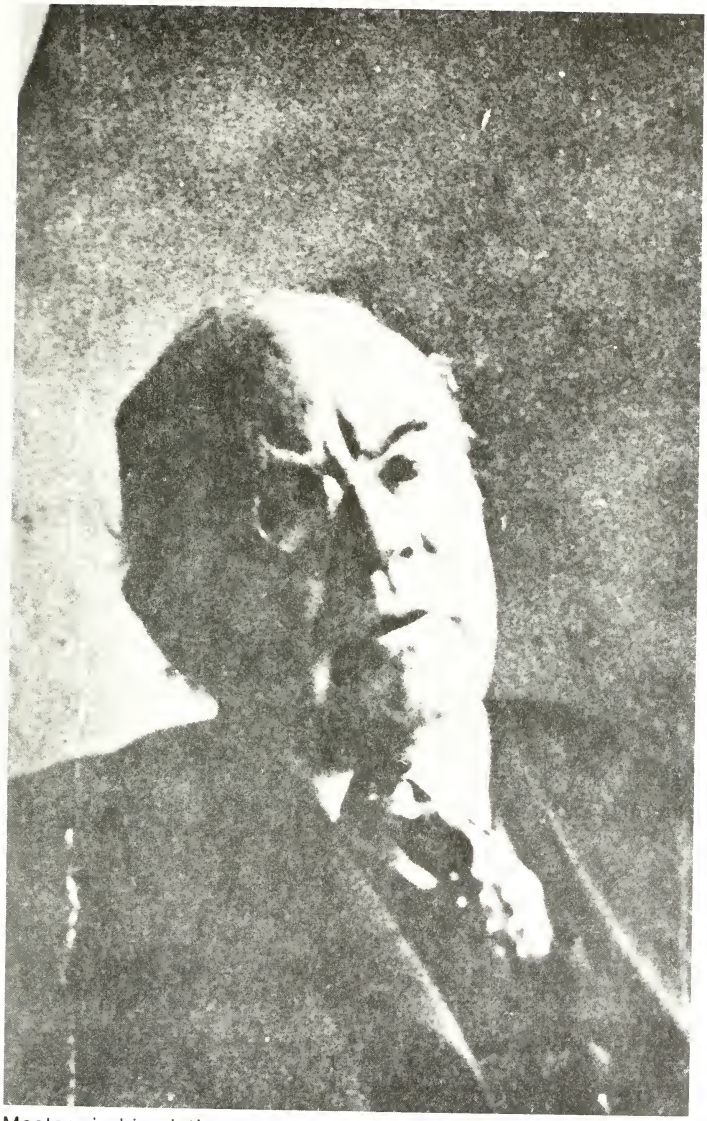
One died in shameful child-birth,
One of a thwarted love,
One at the hands of a brute in a brothel,
One of a broken pride, in the search for heart's desire,
One after life in far-away London and Paris
Was brought to her little space by Ella and Kate and Mag—
All, all are sleeping, sleeping, sleeping on the hill.

Because Americans in the teens were not accustomed to reading about such topics in poetry, and because it was soon generally known that Masters' poems were based largely on real people he had known or had heard about in the days of his youth along Illinois' Sangamon and Spoon Rivers, it was only natural that controversy resulted. And because his technically simple poems seemed easy to copy, it was probably to be expected too that satires on *Spoon River* should follow.

Masters himself was well aware of the clamor and imitative verses he had inspired, remarking in his interesting account of "The Genesis of *Spoon River*" that his epitaphs were "parodied all over America" shortly after they were serialized in *Reedy's Mirror* in 1914-15.[2] Just how many of these satiric verses were published is not known, but they began appearing in great abundance after *Spoon River* was published as a book in April, 1915, and by July 13, 1917, Masters' St. Louis editor-friend, William Marion Reedy, had seen so many that he declared in his *Mirror*, "Everybody seems to be doing something in imitation of *Spoon River Anthology*."

While it would be impossible in an article of this length to draw a comprehensive picture of the imitations, we can gain an idea of their variety by examining some of the very different sources in which they appeared: certain popular and learned journals; several books of poetry which show a particularly close reliance on Masters' *Anthology*; and one newspaper, the *New York Tribune*, which in 1915 offered the chief outlet for satires on *Spoon River* in its "Conning Tower" column edited by Franklin P. Adams.

Like Masters, Adams was a native Midwesterner who had a talent for words and who was at his best when dealing with the unrestrained language of the twentieth century. No less important, he had a good sense of humor, and so, between June 17 and November 11, 1915, he published (from a variety of hands) nineteen separate satires on *Spoon River*. They often began by "bowing to Edgar Lee Masters," or were said to be written "by our own Edgar



Masters in his sixties.

Lee Masters," or otherwise strove to make the appropriate literary connection: "If I were Mr. Masters, / And Mr. Masters I" and so on. Several of these titles continued for two days to a week, with the result that for the first half-year after *Spoon River* had appeared as a book, Adams' nationally-read column was virtually awash with satiric "river anthologies" written, ostensibly, from the banks of the Hudson, the Thames, the Connecticut, the East River, and (it had to be) from "Loon River." There was also a "Schroon Lake Anthology," a "Fox Meadow Tennis Club Anthology," an "Anthracite Anthology," an "Illustrator's Anthology," a "Week-Ender's Anthology," a "Subfluminal Anthology," and others.

Because all the parodies which appeared in Adams' column read about the same, their collective worth—that they exist, and that they were spawned by *Spoon River*—is probably more significant than any individual poem, with one notable exception, that being a satire called "Maurice Vernon" composed by the well-known eastern poet and critic, Louis Untermeyer. What chiefly distinguishes it is that Masters, in a letter dated November 8, 1915, wrote Untermeyer to thank him for sending a copy of "Maurice Vernon" and to say too that he liked this poem better than any of the other (early) satires on *Spoon River*:

I was just sixteen,
In the queer twistings of a delayed adolescence,
When I came to New York;
To study the classics, as my mother said.
And, according to my father, to become a man.
I liked the prep school I attended—
It was such a pleasant place to get away from.
Often I neglected Terence for the tango;
Or Livy for Lillian Lorraine.
I was just learning to wear my dinner-jacket
In that "carefully careless" manner indorsed by "Vogue,"
When my father died bankrupt,
Throwing me upon my own resources.
Then I found I hadn't any.
So, knowing how to use neither my hands nor my brain,
I remembered my feet,
And became a chorus man.
For years I was with Ziegfield and K. & E.;
Then the dance-craze came along and swept me to the heights.
I became a teacher to the most exclusive—
My name was in electric lights six feet high.
The clippings I collected, placed end to end,
Would have reached from Dantzig to Walsingham and back.
Then one night I turned my ankle.
When I was able to get up again
The public had flocked to another favorite.

So I entered an Endurance Dancing Carnival
And waltzed myself to death.

There is a great, saintly-looking fellow here
Whom some call Vitus.
And many dervishes;
And a fine sultry-eyed girl
By the curious name of Miriam.
But most of all we dancers love to watch a certain princess;
Her veils uncoil like seven serpents,
And she carries a dark head on a silver platter.
She dances to it forever.[3]

Of Masters' opinion about the longer satires—those comprising books or book sections—we know considerably less, which is unfortunate since several are noteworthy, if in different ways. The earliest of these (that I have seen) is the "Styx River Anthology," nine satiric poems written by the scholar-compiler Carolyn Wells and published in her massive 1920 *Book of Humorous Verse.* The first book-length satire on *Spoon River* is apparently Henry Savage's *A Long Spoon and the Devil*, a 1922 London-based parody of fifty-five epitaphs. But the most accomplished of these longer works published a half-century or so ago is that by the poet Paul Eldridge, whose "Our Dead Selves" appeared as the opening section to a 1930 volume of his, *Cobwebs and Cosmos.*

"Our Dead Selves" is a beast fable—a *Spoon River* "animal farm"—in which fifty-two animals, four plants, and one timeless river tell their stories. From the grave, the animals candidly discuss their shortcomings, frustrations, and vanities, or set straight their own life record or that of another. The result is an entertaining and instructive collection which maintains a literary merit of its own while closely approximating the irony and inter-relatedness of the *Spoon River* poems, as these two do:

Rooster

The Sun was a balloon of red gold
Which I blew high—high—
Beyond the mountain peaks,
And balanced on the sharp point
Of my crowing.
As the hatchet, lightning-edged,
Struck my defiant throat,
The sky collapsed,
And the sun burst
In a sea of turbulent flames.

Hen

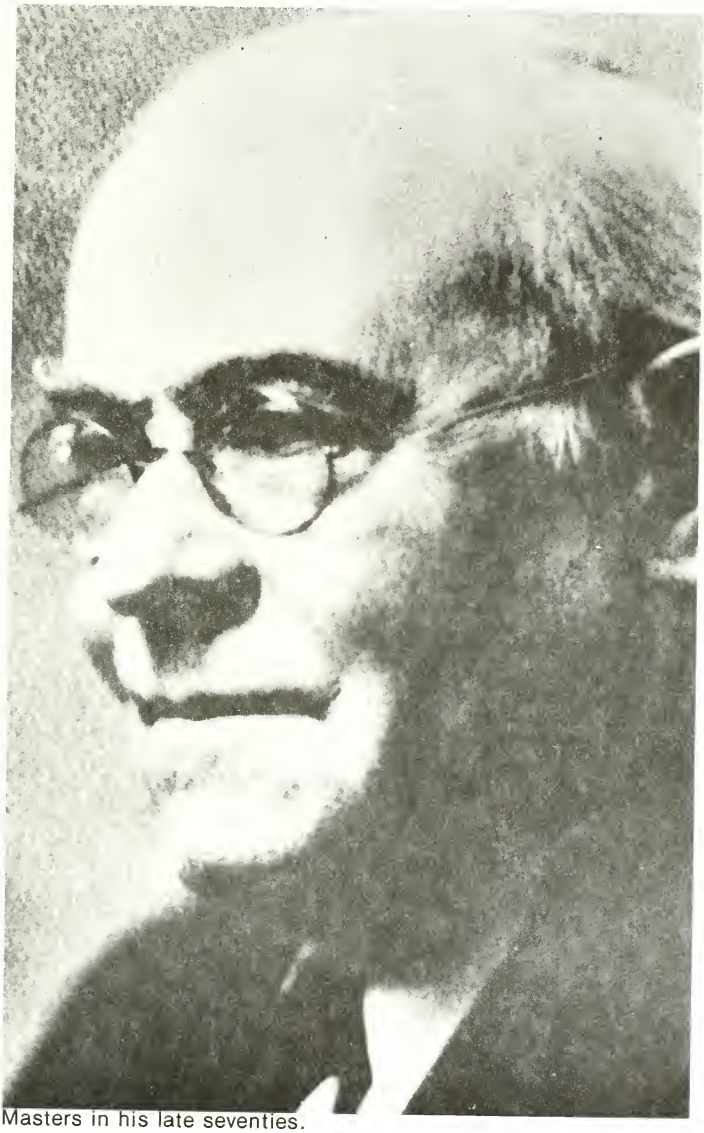
The Sun did not burst,
When your head was chopped,
Arrogant one—
Our young Rooster balanced it,
Lustily,
Upon his haughty regal crest—
And the number of eggs
We laid for him,
With merry cackling,
Was double.[4]

Among later book-length collections are August Derleth's three dozen epitaphs for "Sac Prairie People" (available most readily in his 1967 book of *Collected Poems*), and *Elegy in Manhattan*, a 1961 volume by George (or "Georgie") Jessel—"America's Toastmaster General." Jessell refers to Masters and *Spoon River* in his introduction and then presents what might be called "A Celebrity's Spoon River" about people he knew or knew of through a half century of show business, most of it spent in Manhattan. There are lengthy graveyard verses for such people as Fred Allen, Fanny Brice, Douglas Fairbanks, Al Jolson, Babe Ruth, Fiorello La Guardia and fifty others, all of them in some distinct way entertaining, although not always known primarily as "entertainers," as this excerpt from the introductory poem suggests:

Nearly all are resting on
the banks of Manhattan,
Dreaming of how Lillian Russell
looked that New Year's Eve at Delmonico's,
of what Al Smith said
to Murphy that morning in Tammany Hall,
of what Teddy R. said
at Union Square of young Cohan's "Waving the Flag,"
and of "dashing Jimmy"
the Mayor.[5]

At nearly 200 pages, Jessel's is, I believe, the lengthiest of the *Spoon River* derivatives.

In contrast, what appears to be the shortest separately published collection of imitative poems belongs to Margaret Secrist, whose 1976 pamphlet, *Women of the Revolution*, contains a mini-graveyard of nine epitaphs for women associated in some way with the American War for Independence. It is strange, though, how the lines in these "old" epitaphs seem so remarkably up to date—e.g., that of Deborah Franklin:



Masters in his late seventies.

History has more to say
about Ben's bastard son
and Ben's foreign loves
than about his common-law wife.
I kept the fires at home,
the presses printing at the shop.
I saw to the roasting of meats,
the washing and mending of clothes.
"Poor Richard" had to have time
to write, invent, advise,
to be ambassador
for that Continental Congress.[6]

Of the third group of satires, those published in the popular and learned journals, it is difficult to speak precisely (due to the great number of such magazines), and therefore I would like to approach these by focusing on one which seems to be the first, and another which I believe is the most recent, and a third which is my personal choice as the most innovative.

The first satire I know of is a poem called "Fudge" by an old friend of Masters from his pre-*Spoon River* days in Chicago, Ernest McGaffey. Published in the July 3, 1914 issue of *Reedy's Mirror* (where the Spoon River poems were then being serialized), McGaffey's effort consists solely of the word "fudge" repeated four dozen times through fourteen irregularly spaced lines. When it was published, one of the *Mirror's* editors erected over it the legend, "He's Not from Spoon River," a lasting reminder that early writers of free verse were often accused, even by their friends, of "fudging" or cheating on the traditional rules of poetry.

More typical is Robert L. Coard's eight-part poem, "The Schoolhouse Branch, a Tributary of Spoon River," published in *Scholia Satyrica* in the fall of 1977. This recent imitation is representative of several of the satires in that its alleged reason for being is to correct certain omissions in the original *Spoon River*:

When Edgar Lee Masters set down those confessions from
the grave,
In the time-resistant verse of the *Spoon River Anthology*
and *The New Spoon River* [published in 1924],
He let the poets and lawyers and crooked politicians and
judges and clergymen and
Folks who knew Lincoln
Have plenty to say.
But except for Miss Emily Sparks and a couple of college
professors,
He didn't record much coffin talk from teachers.[7]

Thus Coard offers his "schoolhouse" verses, all of them bearing the unmistakable brand of the teachers' lounge.

Of all the imitative poems, however, the one which strikes me as the most novel is that by the British satirist, J. C. Squire. Published in his *Tricks of the Trade* in 1917 before being reprinted in the March 29, 1918 edition of *Reedy's Mirror*, Squire's trans-Atlantic double parody successfully spoofs both *Spoon River* and the English language's best-known sentimental poem, Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard." Squire relies on the form of Gray's eighteenth-century poem, as well as "echoes" of it, but his content flows straight from Spoon River, as the title indicates: "If Gray Had Had to Write His Elegy in the Cemetery of Spoon River Instead of in That of Stoke Poges."

Needless to say, there is a pronounced difference between Gray's 1751 elegy and Squire's amended version, as can be seen through these two scene-setting stanzas, the first by Gray, the second by Squire:

> Beneath those rugged elms, that yew tree's shade,
> Where heaves the turf in many a moldering heap,
> Each in his narrow cell forever laid,
> The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

> Here where the flattering and mendacious swarm
> Of lying epitaphs their secrets keep,
> At last incapable of further harm
> The lewd forefathers of the village sleep.

Gray, moved by the plight of the unlearned or "rude" forefathers, philosophizes on the pathetic obscurity of those who live and die in tiny hamlets, their talents or "sweetness" wasted:

> Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
> The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear:
> Full many a flower is born to blush unseen
> And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

This is all a matter of perspective, however, for as one of Squire's dead confesses, obscurity can be a useful and even necessary ally:

> Full many a vice is born to thrive unseen,
> Full many a crime the world does not discuss,
> Full many a pervert lives to reach a green
> Replete old age, and so it was with us.

And so on for an additional fifteen stanzas.

What this and the other *Spoon River*-inspired poems seem to offer, then, is a fresh and often lighthearted view of Masters' one

enduring achievement. They remind us too of his book's international appeal and tend to reveal in miniature that diversity of opinion which has characterized reader reaction to *Spoon River* for over half a century. Moreover, it is accurate to say that the bulk of the derivative verses affirm that ancient corollary which states that "imitation is the sincerest form of flattery."

NOTES

[1] *Spoon River Anthology* (New York: Macmillan, 1915). All quotations from the *Anthology* are from this edition.

[2] *The American Mercury*, 28 (January, 1933), 49.

[3] Untermeyer's poem appeared in the *New York Tribune* on 11 October, 1915, p. 7, and is here reprinted with the kind permission of Bryna Untermeyer. For Masters' favorable comments about this poem, see his letter of 8 November, 1915, in the "Edgar Lee Masters Portfolio" at Indiana University's Lilly Library.

[4] Copyright 1930 by Horace Liveright. Copyright renewed 1957 by Paul Eldridge. Fourteen of Eldridge's poems appeared under the title "Anthology of the Lowly" in *The Double Dealer* of March, 1921 (1:107) and March, 1922 (3:127).

[5] *Elegy in Manhattan* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, 1961), p. xiii.

[6] Reprinted with the kind permission of Margaret Secrist.

[7] *Scholia Satyrica*, 3 (1977), 17.

NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

On March 31, 1979, Western Illinois University hosted the first annual meeting of the Western Illinois Regional Studies Association. The theme of the conference was "Preserving and Interpreting the Western Illinois Heritage." The day-long Saturday program included the following papers:

"Western Illinois: The Towns, the Land, the People"
Jerry Klein, Peoria *Journal Star*

"Archaeological Preservation in Western Illinois: A Question of Balance"
Michael Beckes, Illinois State Museum

"Early Impressions of Western Illinois"
James E. Davis, Illinois College

"Primitivism and Paternalism: The Roots of Western Illinois Christianity"
Myron Fogde, Augustana College

"Working in Utopia: Bishop Hill Restoration"
Ronald E. Nelson, Illinois Department of Conservation

"Vachel Lindsay: New Discoveries"
Dennis Camp, Sangamon State University

"Western Illinois County Histories"
Rodney Davis, Knox College

"The Persistence of Style in Western Illinois Architecture, 1830-1890"
William B. Coney, AIA Restoration Architect

Attendants were also treated to a tour of the newly restored McDonough County Courthouse. The new Western Illinois Library was the locale of most of the presentations and was likewise the site of various art, book, and photograph exhibits. The Western Illinois University Museum was also open to those who attended the conference.

One of the members of the Advisory Committee of *Western Illinois Regional Studies*, Professor Stuart M. Struever of Northwestern University, was the subject of an extensive article in the April 26, 1979, issue of the Chicago *Tribune*. Written by Peter

Gorner, the article describes Struever as a "running, teaching, wheedling, hustling" sort of a man: the "doyen" of the famous archaeological dig known as the Koster Site. Uncovered about a decade ago on the farm of Theodore Koster, located near Kampsville some 270 miles southwest of Chicago, the Koster Site has been the center of considerable attention. Early in its development, about eighty-eight corporations and several thousand contributors poured money into the project and, because of the resultant publicity, approximately 30,000 visitors a year trudge through the area in order to touch the pre-literate history of Illinois.

Now, according to Struever, the project is in difficulty. "We've found tons of artifacts at Koster," Struever argues, "but even this extraordinary site has only yielded a third of the cultures we *know* existed in that region." The problem is money. The eighty-eight original corporate contributors have shrunk to twenty-two. Individual contributors have likewise diminished in number. Struever is quoted as saying:

> The public must be brought into science. They've gotta participate. Scholars often feel they have some kind of divine right to do research. Hey, the name of the game is accountability. Public participation is the only way archeology can survive. People say I've had a lot of success. But I don't know, and I mean that. This is a curcial time for me. I may well be a flash in the pan.

The *Chicago Tribune*, July 27, 1979, listed a number of places in western Illinois which were, as writer Howard Reich described them, "historic escapes to another time and place." Included in Reich's survey was Bishop Hill, with its Colony Church, original furniture, and Olaf Krans' paintings. Other spots of interest in western Illinois, according to the writer, were the Knox County Museum, the Wolf Covered Bridge some fifteen miles out of Galesburg on the Spoon River, and the various Sandburg landmarks in Galesburg.

Although it is quite apparent to anyone who drives east on Route 136 that there is abundant coal in western Illinois (See the large scoops as they tear away the top soil!), it is not commonly known that coal mining as a part of the region's economy is nearly 150 years old. In the 1840's, coal was being taken from McDonough County near Colchester by enterprising diggers. Much of the mined coal was purchased by Mormons from Nauvoo who carried the fuel back to that city in wagons.

Some of the coal was found in the Argyle area, where a vein nearly two feet wide ran very close to the surface. Dogs and goats were used by miners to pull the coal in small drays from shallow

pits. There were so many dogs in Colchester, it was said, that they outnumbered the human population by several times. In 1853, James Roberts of Colchester began to mine coal on a larger scale, sending the product to Quincy for shipment on the Mississippi. The Roberts Company eventually became the Quincy Coal Company and then, in 1855, the Colchester Coal Company. In many cases, the men who worked for Roberts mined the coal by lying on their sides while using pickaxes and shovels.

During this era, from approximately 1845 to 1875, scores of British families moved to Colchester, drawn by the prospects of the coal industry. The pay seems infinitesimal by today's standards—five cents per bushel in 1879. There was no labor union, but the miners did organize a "friendly society" in order to take care of unforeseen expenses by members of the group. Friendly societies were the order of the day in England and Scotland, and were the predecessors of privately operated medical insurance groups such as Blue Cross. As anyone who knows British history will argue, they also were the predecessors to government-sponsored health protection and assistance.

Another leading coal producing area over the years has been Macoupin County. Today, that same county is the center of frenzied activity on behalf of the local historical society. Led by Ms. Dorrell Kilduff and others, the Macoupin County Historical Society has established a museum, an artifact room, and a collection of medical instruments which might the envy of any museum collector. The success of the Macoupin Society is shown in its treasurer's balance: $2550.32, as of the July 1, 1979, meeting.

Macoupin County has had an interesting and colorful past. Mary Harris "Mother" Jones is buried in the little town of Mt. Olive. "Mother" Jones and John L. Lewis, who worked at Panama a few miles away, were instrumental in making the county into the center of Illinois coal mining radicalism. General (and later Governor) John Palmer came from Carlinville and is buried there. The Macoupin County Courthouse was one of the wonders of nineteenth-century Illinois: it still is. Built in the 1860's and 1870's, it cost the taxpayers the enormous sum of a million-and-a-half dollars (though estimates vary on this amount). Its golden dome can be seen for miles, and it rivals the State Capitol in Springfield.

Yet, it is not the past which brings Macoupin County into the headlines today. One of the younger settlements in the county is Wilsonville, a coal mining village established during World War I. Named after the President Wilson the town was the site of Superior Coal Mine No. 4. The Superior Coal Company then was a subsidiary of the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad Company. The little

village drew immigrants from every country in Europe excepting Spain, Norway, and Sweden. By 1928, the population was 1200. A year later the depression hit; the banks in the area closed, and Mine No. 4 was plagued with strikes. In 1937, the first below-the-surface, sit-down strike in labor history was held there; the miners staying below for over nine days. Eventually, after World War II, the Superior Coal Company closed its Macoupin County operations and Wilsonville was left to fend for itself. Still the village survived, becoming a kind of bedroom town to a laboring force which worked in Granite City and Alton. In 1975, a company known as the Earthline Corporation bought tracts of land near the village and began to bury hazardous wastes. The inhabitants took their case to court and, after a long siege of hearings, were awarded an order which restrained Earthline from burying further wastes. In fact, the company was even enjoined to remove those wastes which had already been interred.

At the northern end of Macoupin County is the town of Virden. There, in April, 1898, the miners of the Chicago-Virden Coal Company went on strike because they objected to a reduction of wages to thirty cents per ton extracted. The Company countered by attempting to hire Chinese labor, but none could be found. The coal operators then decided to recruit black labor in Alabama. The first attempt to bring the black workers into Virden was turned back, but in October, the employers hired guards armed with Winchester rifles and ran the train back towards town. The miners met them with shotguns and hunting rifles. The result: seven miners killed, forty wounded, and five guards killed. None of the black miners were killed. It was hardly a racial issue at all, for among the miners opposing the importations of blacks from Alabama were a number of black miners who came down from Springfield.

At the southern end of Macoupin County is the little town of Benld. Once known in the 1920's as the "most wicked little city in the United States" because of its open bootlegging and prostitution, the town has the distinction of being the only place in the world with that name. It happened this way. An enterprising landowner by the name of Benjamin L. Dorsey decided to open a coal mine on a section of his holdings. He constructed the typple of the mine and then hired a painter to climb aboard a scaffold to paint the name of the owner. The sign painter finished only "Ben L. D" when the scaffold broke, causing him to be injured. The sign was never completed, and the people who built homes about the mine soon became accustomed to referring to their town as Benld!

One last bit of information on Macoupin County. Just prior to 1900 there was a small community near Girard by the name of Green

Ridge. At the turn of the century it was the locale of a most bizarre incident. A luminous green object (which, incidentally, had been seen elsewhere throughout the midwest) was reported to have descended into a field nearby. When the people who occupied nearby farms rushed to see this peculiarity, it rose into the air and moved toward the north. Was it a UFO? The *Carlinville Democrat* thought it to be a hoax of some sort. "The majority of people will believe in air ships when they see them," it reported, "and not until then."

I have just finished reading a book entitled *The Landed Gentry*, written by Sophy Burnham (G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1978). In general, it is a discussion of European investors who came to the United States in the nineteenth century and who bought up huge tracts of land. The author includes the name of William Scully (1820-1906), the son of an Irish landowner. Scully came to America in 1849 and bought thirteen square miles of land in Logan County, Illinois. Before his death, Scully had increased his holdings to 220,000 acres in four states—Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, and Illinois—and farming this land for him were some 1,200 different families.

Burnham also includes material on the Oughton family which, as the author puts it, "pretty well own" Dwight County, Illinois. In 1970, Diana Oughton, one of the descendants, was blown up in a Greenwich Village townhouse while presumably making bombs. She was a member of the Weatherman faction which gained so much notoriety in the 1960's and 1970's. Burnham also notes the existence of the Patee family which owned 8,000 to 10,000 acres near Monmouth, Illinois, and of the Drakes who owned 20,000 acres near Elkhart. Unfortunately, she gives little attention to the Sibleys and the Sullivans who owned huge tracts of land near Champaign. In the 1890's, Congress, along with some states, placed restrictions upon an alien's right to own land. The Scullys quickly became American citizens and, even today, approximately 203,000 acres of land near the town of Emden and in Champaign County are under the Scully title.

These episodes explain why local historical societies work so hard at preserving their past. What comes to mind, for example, is the work of the Quincy Historical Society, which set out to raise $300,000 in order to preserve the famous John Wood Mansion of that city. As of last report, the Society is within a fraction of achieving that goal.

To illustrate the importance of the preservation and study of regional history, I am pleased to note the April/May, 1979, issue of

American Heritage. That publication contains a fascinating set of pictures both taken and collected by George Lawton in the 1890's. Lawton was a telegraph operator for Western Union in Denver. From time to time he wore a six shooter to work and, apparently to his great delight, was given the job of stringing line across hostile Indian country. Lawton loved to collect pictures of the old West and of the "bad men" who robbed and killed there. Upon his retirement, he was persuaded by his wife to move to a farm near Plymouth, Illinois. There he lived until 1931. Upon his death, his collection of pictures of the "law and order" West fell into the hands of Ron Keefer of Macomb. He submitted them recently to *American Heritage*—hence, the article.

On the weekend of July 21 and 22, 1979, an "Icarian Weekend in Nauvoo" was held in that Mississippi town. Although the Illinois Humanities Council gave substantial support to the meeting, the program was principally the result of the work of several organizations and institutions: The Descendants of the Icarians, the Institute for Icarian Investigations (at the University of Nebraska-Omaha), and the Center for Icarian Studies (at Western Illinois University). The theme of the meeting was "Humanistic Values of the Icarian Movement for Today's World."

A tour of Icarian buildings was conducted on the morning of July 21, followed by lunch at the Icarian Restaurant. Those who attended the meeting were treated to scholarly papers read by Dr. Lillian M. Snyder, Executive Director, Descendants of the Icarians; Professor Jacque C. Chicoineau, Webster College, St. Louis; Dr. Robert P. Sutton, Western Illinois University; Dr. Wayne Wheeler, University of Nebraska at Omaha; and Professor Del Stites, Bellevue College, Bellevue, Nebraska. The highlight of the meeting was a Saturday evening multi-media presentation entitled "America's Seven Icarians," written and produced by Dale Larson, and Douglas and Beth McMains. The University of Nebraska at Omaha sponsored the production. On the afternoon of July 22, the Descendants of the Icarians held their annual carry-in picnic at the Nauvoo State Park. Jules Renaud of Alexandria, Virginia, and Professor Rulon Smithson of Western Illinois University presented the program. For information about future Icarian activities, contact either Dr. Lillian Snyder or Dr. Robert Sutton at Western Illinois University.

Victor Hicken
Western Illinois University

REVIEWS OF BOOKS

ILLINOIS: A BICENTENNIAL HISTORY. By Richard J. Jensen. New York: W. W. Norton, 1978. Pp. xix, 191. $9.95.

One of the few promising projects for the ill-fated celebration of the bicentennial of the American Revolution was the decision to publish a one-volume history of each of the states and the District of Columbia. Professor Jensen provides the Illinois volume in this series.

Professor Jensen describes one of his goals: ". . . to get beneath the familiar events and unusual personalities to provide a description of the way ordinary people of Illinois have lived and an interpretation of what they sought out of life." This is laudable but difficult. Virtually every generation of historians in the twentieth century has called for this kind of history. Mostly they have fallen short of the goal and Professor Jensen doesn't succeed very well either. There are glimpses of the "common man" but his account tends to get skewed to the upper and middle classes. Politics creeps into the account as does the culture and economics of the well-off.

Professor Jensen has attempted an interpretative history of the behavior of the people, particularly the leadership. Admitting this is risky; he eschews familiar terms such as "liberal," "conservative," or "progressive," preferring the words "traditional," "modern," and "post-modern." There is nothing wrong with this but somehow the application grates on this reviewer's ears when John Peter Altgeld becomes a traditionalist and Everett McKinley Dirkson becomes a modernist, a label that surely would make the honey-voiced Senator twitch if he could hear it.

There are other problems with the book, some of which are not Professor Jensen's fault. By the format set forth, there is no annotation. The bibliography is distressingly short. A photographic essay by Donald Getsug, handsome though it is, seems not to apply to much of anything.

My judgement is that every Illinois history buff should read the book. Professor Jensen writes well. Many will find it interesting. Perhaps some of the problem with this book arises from the fact that it is simply impossible to deal with the history of a complex

state like Illinois in 179 pages of text. Without information the interpretation becomes sloppy.

Donald F. Tingley
Eastern Illinois University

KOSTER: AMERICANS IN SEARCH OF THEIR PREHISTORIC PAST. By Stuart Struever and Felicia Antonelli Holton. Garden City, New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1979. Pp. 273. $12.95.

The long awaited popular summary of the enormous archaeological project at the Koster Site has finally appeared. This carefully written and profusely illustrated work is intended to introduce the lay public to the methodology, problems, and excitement which go along with major excavations at complex, deeply stratified prehistoric sites. It succeeds remarkably well at the task of making complicated research questions and convoluted archaeological jargon understandable, and it introduces the reader to the human side of field research projects.

Chapters one through seven provide background information on the actual discovery of the Koster Site and on Dr. Struever's long term interest in the prehistory of the Lower Illinois Valley. Many readers will find these among the most enjoyable sections of the book since they highlight some of the most attractice aspects of archaeology. The thrill of discovering a major prehistoric site, the first few tentative probes and test pits where undisturbed artifacts are encountered, and the mounting excitement as the potential significance or unique nature of the site begins to dawn upon the exploratory field party, are the elements of archaeological fieldwork to which most people are drawn. Struever aptly conveys all this in an easy, unpretentious style. He also effectively deflates some of the romance of archaeology by describing the heat, dust, and tedium that are the lot of the usual field party. Struever's narrative describing the people and places around Kampsville, Mary and Teed Koster, and their collective reaction to a virtual invasion of archaeologists and students, is warm and entertaining.

In chapter eight the authors attempt to define and summarize a complex intellectual ferment which began in American archaeology in the early 1960s and is still under way today. This introspective re-evaluation of the methods, goals, and philosophy of anthropological archaeology has been termed the "New Archaeology." Koster can be legitimately regarded as the most extensive application of the approach thus far. Struever participated in much of the early development of the New Archaeology, is a self-defined

New Archaeologist, and does a very complete job of describing the current, multidisciplinary, approach to field research.

His discussion of the development of archaeology as a scientific discipline is accurate, concise, and well thought out. He clearly demarcates the difference between the earlier artifact-oriented, relic-hunting approach to archaeological fieldwork and the more rigorous problem-oriented research being conducted today. Contemporary archaeology, he points out, draws upon the physical sciences, computer studies, ecology, climatology, and a host of other ancillary studies in an attempt to understand the social processes of long-dead human societies. This section should help dispel the antiquarian or treasure-hunting notions of archaeology held by many readers, and is perhaps the most informative portion of the book. A more complete presentation of the role of quantified data and statistical analysis in the New Archaeology would have augmented his discussion, but might have stifled many readers.

Chapters nine through seventeen present a series of detailed glimpses of the various specialized laboratories and sorts of analysis being carried out at the Kampsville facility. We are introduced to the people conducting the detailed studies in paleoclimatology, geomorphology, paleobotany, faunal analysis, lithic technology, and bioanthropology. Each section is well written and well integrated, and will provide fascinating reading for those who ask "How do you really know that? or How does it really work?" Again the authors have removed the scientific jargon and made clear some very complicated and esoteric branches of inquiry.

The final two chapters summarize the implications of the Koster research for North American archaeology, and reconstruct an average day in the life of the Indians who inhabited Koster over 5000 years ago. This last is a marked departure from the usual archaeological report with its emphasis on material artifacts or structures, and is an excellent attempt to put the American Indian back into American Archaeology.

I would recommend *Koster* to anyone interested in modern archaeology in the Americas. It would be of equal use for beginning students as a guide to what current archaeology is really about. There are far more microscopes and computer printouts at Koster than pith helmets. Struever and Holton have definitely succeeded in taking modern archaeology to the public with this one.

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PIONEER'S PROGRESS: ILLINOIS COLLEGE, 1829-1979. By Charles E. Frank. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1979. Pp. xvi, 409. $17.50.

Contrary to what one may think, there are numerous pitfalls awaiting the author of a history of any university or college. The researcher is faced with a paucity of impartial information, there are living alumni and faculty who see different versions of events than do the author, and one comes up against an insistent notion that he should not write anything which may be the least bit detrimental to any part of the institution in question. In this respect, Shakespeare was probably wrong when he had Marc Anthony tell his listeners that the good that men do is often interred with their bones, and that the evil associated with them lives long afterwards. The truth is that, when one writes an institutional history, the opposite is very likely the case.

Charles E. Frank, the author of this account dealing with Illinois College of Jacksonville, is Pixley Professor of Humanities at that school. He has organized his book in a rather unusual manner, taking much of the early history of the college from *Illinois College: A Centennial History*, by Charles H. Remmelkamp, published in the 1930's. The second half of the book deals with the school's history since the publication of Remmelkamp's work. Much of the newer material comes from Illinois College archives and from oral interviews. Frank disdains footnotes—"Latin abbreviations, indications of elision and emendation," he calls them—claiming that what he aims for is "readability and clarity."

To some historians this would seem to verge upon the sacrilegious. To the logical scholar who has attempted writing of this kind, Frank's approach is the cleanest and neatest manner in which to achieve the purpose of institutional history. After all, the work is intended to be read by alumni and friends of the college. They usually care little about the niceties of scholarship and prefer, instead, a book which evokes old memories and associations.

Beyond the division of the volume into two broad parts, Frank follows the usual format in tracing the history of the college. In decades past, and to a large extent in the present, colleges and universities are and have been dominated by the personalities of their presidents. Frank deals with them all: Beecher, Sturtevant, Crampton, Tanner, Bradley, Barnes, and all of the rest down to the more recent administrations of Hudson, Selden, Caine, and Mundinger. He details the financial struggles of these men, the hard times and the good, and even gets into the perilous times of the 1960's.

The last chapter, "Illinois College, Where Are You Going?", is apparently an attempt to peer into the future of the institution. This segment of the book is exceedingly short—which gives one some idea of the difficulties of foresight—and it is, furthermore, hardly instructive to the reader about the role ahead for this oldest of Illinois's institutions of higher learning. He does conclude, however, that the future of the school looks "bright," though he hedges somewhat by adding that one "must practice caution" in making predictions.

All in all, the alumni and supporters of Illinois College must be proud of the most recent addition to the historical materials dealing with the school. It is well written, nicely printed, properly illustrated, and an excellent candidate for any book award confined to state and local history.

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ECHOES OF THEIR VOICES: A SAGA OF THE PIONEERS WHO PUSHED WESTWARD TO THE MISSISSIPPI. By Carl R. Baldwin. St. Louis, Hawthorn 1978. Pp. 367. $10.95.

"I wish I had known," Baldwin laments, prefacing his account of some of the 18th-century settlers of St. Clair, Madison and Monroe counties. But he did not know the fascination of local history until he retired after many years as an investigative reporter for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. "I have been thrilled," he writes, "by discovering authentic stories about the first settlers . . ." (p. 12). He describes his book as "a powerful brew of almost equal parts extensive research and disciplined imagination" (p. 5).

It is divided into three sections. In part one, "A Walk Through Cahokia," Pontiac, the Sauciers, the Jarrots, and all their relatives and friends share more than a hundred pages with the Cahokia courthouse from the day it was built to its destruction, its rebuilding in Chicago about 1901, and its return to Cahokia in 1939.

The remaining two hundred pages are peopled mainly by the Whitesides, their ancestors and their innumerable relatives by birth and marriage. They, or their acquaintances, are actors in tales spun of the French and Indian War, the American Revolution, and the movement West. Pages are filled with accounts of the almost incessant warfare waged by the Whitesides against the Indians whom they regarded as a race of butchers (p. 239).

Though the book jacket claims the author has corrected "many historical errors," what they are is not clearly evident. Baldwin himself occasionally errs. He explains that the narrow fields of the French villages "allowed the owners to work close together for mutual protection against Indian attacks." (p. 109). In fact, the French and Indians in that part of Illinois lived together, intermarried, even in a few cases had neighboring fields. The land division was only the ancient field system of France, brought to New France by the earliest colonial officials.

He says that the Jesuits were banned "from the American Bottom by Great Britain in 1763" (p. 100). They were rather expelled from the nation and from all French possessions by the French government early in 1763. The British did not actually possess Illinois until October, 1765.

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CONTRIBUTORS

EILEEN SMITH CUNNINGHAM, an historian who lives near Carrollton, has published *Lower Illinois Valley Sketches of Long Ago* (1975), *Lower Illinois Valley Limestone Houses* (1976), and other works of local history. Mabel Ambrose Schneider is her aunt, now ninety-one years old, who lives in Carrollton.

JOHN E. HALLWAS, Director of Regional Collections at Western Illinois University Library, has published articles on more than a dozen Illinois authors, as well as on folk lore, travel literature, and historical subjects related to the state. In 1976 he co-edited a book on Lindsay, Masters, and Sandburg entitled *The Vision of This Land.*

GEORGE MONTEIRO, Professor of English at Brown University, has published articles on John Hay's short fiction and is the author of *Henry James and John Hay: The Record of a Friendship* (1965).

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OWEN P. HAWLEY, Professor of English at Marietta College, Ohio, has been a scholar of Lindsay's work for over twenty years and is the author of numerous articles on Lindsay as poet-artist. He was granted a sabbatical in the 1977-78 academic year to continue his research at the Alderman Library of the University of Virginia and at Lindsay's alma mater, Hiram College.

HERB RUSSELL, a member of the Department of English, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, completed a doctoral dissertation on Edgar Lee Masters at that institution a few years ago. Since then, he has published articles on Masters in *Essays in Literature, The Markham Review, Midwestern Miscellany*, and other journals.